

THE ASSAM OPIUM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE, 1933

EVIDENCE

VOL II.

NOWGONG, TEZPUR AND GAUHATI

SHILLONG

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Witnesses examined in July 1933.

AT NOWGONG.

AT TEZPUR.

Q.—Have you any particular knowledge about anybody who has been so tempted to this habit ?

A.—I should say, in this way. If you sell opium to a certain man of a certain family, other members will also try and take opium from that man. If there be no illicit sale, then it would not have been possible for other members to take any surplus opium and the rationed quantity would be taken by the consumer himself. If one person can get his supply from shortweight sales other people could take advantage of it because it is to be had.

Q.—Have you got any personal knowledge of any such case ?

A.—I have already told you that my opinion is derived from information received from lessees and consumers and *ex*-lessees.

Q.—Do you have any idea of the price of these savings of the mahaldars ?

A.—Formerly it used to be given at Rs. 5 to Rs. 8, but now it has gone down to Rs. 2 to Rs. 3. That is my information.

Q.—Why has it gone down now ?

A.—It has gone down owing to economic depression.

Q.—Have you any idea of any smuggling of opium from outside the province ?

A.—I believe that there is some smuggling going on. Especially, some Marwaris or Chinamen smuggle opium into Assam for the use of their own class of people.

Q.—Has there been any case of smuggled opium in this place ?

A.—Probably there was.

Q.—Have you any knowledge ?

A.—Yes there were some cases in the Courts.

Q.—Not very much smuggled opium as far as you know ?

A.—No, not very much.

Q.—Do you suspect that some Marwaris and Chinamen bring opium from outside, and distribute these to their own class of people ?

A.—Yes, to their own class of people.

Q.—Have you got many Chinamen in the district who consume opium ?

A.—Yes, they are mostly unregistered consumers I should say.

Q.—Well, do you think that this amount of smuggled opium will endanger, in any way, the present policy of ten per cent. reduction?

A.—As regards the plains, I do not think it will endanger the policy: but as regards hills, I think it will endanger.

Q.—Do you think this practice of shortweight sales will in any way endanger the success of the policy?

A.—I am afraid, it will.

Q.—In what way?

A.—If the practice goes on, it will increase the opium-taking habit of the people, and other members will be induced to take opium from these members, opium will be smuggled into Assam and the number of unregistered consumers will be increased.

Q.—You suppose then that the surplus opium that is saved by the mahaldars is sold to unregistered consumers?

A.—Not only to unregistered consumers, but also to those registered consumers who have not enough ration. Some of the present registered consumers are not really consumers.

Q.—Have you come across any such cases.

A.—I have heard.

Q.—What do they do with that opium?

A.—They sell it to others.

Q.—Do you think that there is a good number of these people?

A.—There are some, but I cannot say how many.

Q.—What do you think is the number of unregistered consumers in this district?

A.—I should say, 10 to 15 per cent. of the number of registered consumers.

Q.—Do you think that most of these people are elderly people or are they younger people?

A.—Most of them are elderly people.

Q.—What do you mean by "elderly people"?

A.—People above 35 years of age

Q.—Do you mean those that have newly acquired the habit?

A.—Some have newly acquired the habit, while some are already addicted to it.

Q.—If that be the case, do you think that it would be a wise idea to re-open the register?

A.—This is a very difficult question. But I should say that those who are confirmed addicts should be brought on the register. There are again new consumers who are youngsters, and they should be stopped.

Q.—At what age would you put it ?

A.—Below 30 years, no passes should be issued. If any pass is to be issued to those between 30 and 40 years of age, it should be temporary. They must apply within a certain time.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Are these passes to be issued having regard to age ?

A.—Passes may be issued to confirmed addicts above 30 years No passes are to be issued to anybody below 30 years.

CHAIRMAN :—Even if they be confirmed addicts?

A.—Yes. Only in the case of confirmed addicts between 30 and 40 years. And these are to be temporary.

Q.—What do you mean by temporary passes ?

A.—They must give up the habit by a certain time, say in four or five years.

MR. DAWSON :—Between the age of 30 and 40, the passes should be made temporary ?

A.—Yes.

CHAIRMAN :—For persons above 50 ?

A.—They should be allowed permanently.

Q.—For those between 40 and 50 ?

A.—They should be given permanent passes if they are confirmed addicts.

CHAIRMAN :—Now suppose the register is opened. What will you do with applicant ? How will it be known that he is an addict ?

A.—Regular enquiries should be made as to how many years he had been taking opium. If it is found that he has been taking for a short duration by resorting to opium got by shortweight sales, he should be rejected ; but if he has used it for a long time there the case is different.

Q.—Who should make the enquiry ? Would you depend on M[illegible]l Officer ?

[illegible] only Medical Officer; he is not always right. [illegible] people should be consulted such as gaonburas, bri[illegible] er respectable people of the village.

[illegible] approve of the formation of a commit-

[illegible]

[illegible]ld be on the committee ?

[illegible]stly un[illegible] Officer and three non-

Q.—Would you take a member of the Council?

A.—I do not mind.

Q.—Would you depend on the District Officer?

A.—Of course to a great deal.

Q.—Would you advise that he should be the sole authority, to decide whether the man is an opium addict or not, and should be given a pass?

A.—At any rate he should take the opinion of the mauzadars and other respectable people, *e.g.*, the gaonbura and others.

Q.—Do you suggest any reduction in the price of the treasury opium?

A.—No.

Q.—Should it be increased?

A.—No. That will induce smugglers from other places.

Q.—Your suggestion is to create an effective public opinion to check the opium habit by regular temperance associations?

A.—We should make propaganda work; whatever you do, whatever action you take, you cannot check the opium habit unless there be regular propaganda. If you reduce it by force, probably smugglers will come in and take their place.

Q.—Your suggestion is by temperance propaganda?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any other suggestion?

A.—No.

Q.—Would you approve of the suggestion that Government should spend a certain amount of money for the sake of temperance propaganda?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that it will be reasonable for Government to allot a certain amount of money for that purpose?

A.—They may allot but it lies with the people to see that it is successful.

Q.—What do you think of the suggestion that in order to eradicate the opium habit, a notice should be issued declaring that after 6 months all issues of opium to all consumers below the age of 50 would be stopped altogether?

A.—I should like to see it eradicated but the suggestion may not be practicable. If you stop it at once there should be an increase of staff. You cannot check the habit at once. People will resort to smuggling and to cultivation of poppy. Even now there is poppy cultivation in the Mikir Hills and t[illegible] n a recent case of detection. The habit will take t[illegible]

Q.—You know there are some people who have got passes but have not got enough rations. Would you advise that their rations should be increased?

A.—I do not advise.

Q.—You advise that Government should continue this ten per cent. reduction, and in five years' time there will be no more opium issued to anyone excepting to those above the age of 50?

A.—I think the policy should continue. It is too early at the present juncture to stop it altogether. On account of the economic depression; even if you increase the ration of the consumer, perhaps no consumer will take his full ration for want of money. Even if you re-open the register, you will find that those who are given 4 tolas cannot buy more than 3 tolas.

Q.—Can it not be due to the fact that they get smuggled opium at a lower rate?

A.—Perhaps not. It may be so in a very few cases that they get it at a low rate but I do not believe there is any smuggling into the district.

Examined by MR. DAWSON:—

Q.—Take the case of a man over the age of 50, supposing he has a ration of 1 tola per month and that he is quite satisfied with this, do you think it does him much harm?

A.—It may not. I cannot say definitely, because I have got no experience. That is my difficulty.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN—

Q.—You know Government is reducing 10 per cent. every year, can the opium-eater habituate himself to this, or does he feel that it is forced on him?

A.—It is no doubt forced on him. But in any case he will have to become habituated to it.

Q.—Will they not hanker for their full ration?

A.—Probably they may. These men will hanker for anything.

Q.—You say that these Marwaris and Chinamen smuggle opium only for their own people. How can you say that they do not sell it to other opium-eaters?

A.—I have already told you that I have no personal knowledge.

Q.—Is it also not possible that they may sell?

A.—They may barter.

CHAIRMAN :—This is only your guess?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you say that you want a small committee of influential people sitting in the town? Will they be able to find out who is a real addict and who is not or will it be better for the Deputy Commissioner or the Medical Officer of the district to do it?

A.—What can a Medical Officer do?

Q.—You like that the Deputy Commissioner should be helped by the Medical Officer?

A.—There should be a regular enquiry.

Q.—Should it be in the town?

A.—Not in the town but in the village—in the interior.

Q.—Suppose in Nowgong a committee is formed with yourself, Mr. Goswami and Khan Bahadur Nuruddin Ahmed, will you then be able to know who are real consumers?

A.—They will make some enquiries and put it before the committee.

Q.—Supposing you take the help of the local people?

A.—That should be done everywhere; the committee will be helped by the local people.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—You said that due to this policy there has been an increase in the number of unregistered consumers. May I know how?

A.—There were no unregistered consumers before this policy was inaugurated. There was no pass system. People who secretly took opium were very small in number; now the number is very large. Previously it was 1 in 1,000; now it is 10 or 20 in 1,000. It is very large.

Q.—You say, smuggling in the hills endangers this policy of 10 per cent reduction. Is there any reduction in the hills?

A.—That question is to be answered by the departmental staff.

Q.—Do you know that there is no ten per cent. reduction in the hills?

A.—I have heard so.

Q.—But I find that consumption in the hills has gone down very low in spite of their being no registration or 10 per cent. reduction?

A.—It will be due to poppy cultivation, trade depression or smuggling. I cannot say which of the three is the real reason.

Q.—Have there been any cases of poppy cultivation?

A.—There may have been.

Q.—You say that some of the registered consumers are not real consumers.

A.—Yes.

Q.—I think you also agree that there are also some unregistered consumers who are not real consumers.

A.—I do not understand this question. There are some who are not real consumers among registered consumers.

Q.—There are some registered consumers who take opium to sell to unregistered consumers?

A.—Some unregistered consumers may not be actual consumers—they may be middle men purchasing for sale.

Q.—You said that if a man is found to take opium for a long time, he should be given a pass?

A.—Let me explain—Suppose you find an opium-eater who has been addicted to opium before the pass system was introduced. Will you not issue a pass to him? In some cases if you find that the medical opinion is definite that after using opium for years it is essential to the man's health then he should be given a pass. If the medical opinion in another case where the man may be using opium for 10 years is that the consumer can get along without it, then he should not be given a pass. There are many other circumstances to be considered.

Q.—What other circumstances?

A.—His constitution, his health and the circumstances in which he began to take opium.

Q.—Then you do not prescribe any period of previous consumption?

A.—I cannot say definitely.

Q.—Then a man taking to the habit of opium for one year or two years or for five or ten years should be granted a pass or not?

A.—Generally I should say that if a youngster takes to opium without any reason, I should reject his application. But if he had been taking opium even before the pass system was introduced, I should consider his application carefully. Every circumstance will have to be taken into consideration. No pass should be issued to a person below 30 years of age under any consideration without a medical certificate.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Is it a case of a medical certificate or medical prescription?

A.—Not prescription. Supposing he gets chronic dysentery, he must be given a pass.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Do you not consider that even if you throw open the register, there will be an impression in people's minds that even afterwards they can take to the habit again and that there may again be a time when the register would have to be re-opened?

A.—I have considered that aspect.

Q.—Will it not give an impetus to some at least to take to that habit?

A.—Why should it? The registers are not for new consumers but only for those who have not been registered previously.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—You said that the present Government policy is a partial success. Then are you definitely in favour of continuing the present cut for the remaining five years?

A.—The defects should be remedied.

Q.—Are you in favour of continuing the policy for the remaining five years?

A.—Yes

Q.—What do you suggest for tackling this shortweight problem?

A.—I think some sort of pill system should be introduced. You should also increase the number of preventive officers.

Q.—Have you any idea that this 10 per cent. reduction and the high price of opium paid by an unregistered consumer have turned the mass people into poverty?

A.—How can it be? Because formerly, they used to buy 2 tolas, but now they buy 1 tola. If the price is raised from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2, the fact remains the same.

Q.—Have you any idea of the price of the opium which the lessee generally charges to an unregistered opium consumer?

A.—I have already said. Two to 3 rupees. Previously it was 5 to 6 rupees.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY—

Q.—You have said that you are in favour of opening the register to those who are confirmed addicts. May we [illegible] exactidea for how long this register is to remain

A.—You will have to consider all applications. You will have to consider locally who are unregistered consumers, and how long they have been using opium. They should all be given previous notice for a month or so that the register would be open.

Q.—Perhaps you know that notice was issued to the people previously to the effect that the register would be closed on a given date?

A.—I should say people do not get notice if you put it in the kutchery compound. It is issued to the gaonburas who take a month to publish it. I have no knowledge how the registration were done previously.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Do you know that many confirmed addicts have been compelled to give up their habit on account of economic difficulties?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you perhaps know also of several instances in which opium-eaters have given up their opium habit under force of circumstances?

A.—Under force of circumstances, people have been compelled to take one meal a day. Will they not go back to their habits when prosperity returns? During the non-co-operation movement a great many people gave up their opium habit, but when the movement subsided they again took it up.

Q.—But not cent. per cent.?

A.—Not cent. per cent. So I say there should be some propaganda.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Does propaganda mean keeping opium in front of them?

A.—Non-co-operation brought about a check gradually. If you do something of the sort now people will not believe it. Government will be suspected of having a motive behind the propaganda.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—Should the propaganda be by Government agency?

CHAIRMAN :—Would it not be better if Government officers asked people to give it up?

A.—People will think that Government want them to take more opium.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Do people believe that Government want that opium should continue?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So if the Deputy Commissioner, when he goes out on tour asks the people to discontinue, what will happen ?

A.—They will not believe ; that is the mentality of the people.

CHAIRMAN —Some may believe.

A.—Generally people in the village are not very intelligent.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—You do not seriously believe that opium addicts will be any the more worse if they do not get opium ?

A.—I have no personal experience. That matter has been thoroughly discussed in other Commissions and I do not know if some bad effects would not come out of it if they are not allowed opium. It may be for some time that they may have some difficulty.

Q.—After the period of suffering had passed would they be better ?

A.—I have no experience

Q.—You have said that some registered opium consumers are not actually consumers Do you not think that if you throw open the register again, there is a risk of taking in some pretending consumers ?

A—So I say that there should be a full enquiry and only the real addicts should be allowed.

Q.—Do you think that the unregistered consumers are getting their regular supply of opium ?

A.—Yes from the lessees. The lessees must dispose of the shortweight.

Q—Is it not possible that they sell it to those whose rations have been cut ?

A.—In that case, we would find that all the rations mentioned in the passes have been sold. But in many cases, in about 60 to 70 per cent. of cases, the full ration has not been taken.

Q.—Do you talk of recent years ?

A.—At least in recent years.

Q.—What value would you give to medical opinion in the committee if medical opinion was to the effect that a man does not want opium ?

A.—I would consider that opinion along with other circumstances. I would add that medical opinion is by itself not conclusive.

Q.—On the whole, attempt should be made to prevent shortweight sales ?

A.—Yes ; also to bring in actual consumers on the register.

Q.—You mean by consumers those to whom opium is necessary for the preservation of their health and existence ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Can you give us an idea of the price of contraband opium ?

A.—I am sorry I have no idea.

CHAIRMAN :—For the sake of stopping shortweight would you advocate the idea that opium should be sold by Government officers ?

A.—My opinion is not favourable to that. He who goes to *Lanka* is a *Ravana*. I should think if the pill form is introduced and also if the preventive staff is more careful something can be done.

Q.—Supposing you have a Government officer to distribute opium. Would that not help the situation ?

A.—But who will give the guarantee that Government officers would not also be dishonest ?

No. 2.

(SRIJUT MOTI RAM BORA, SRIJUT BIDYADHAR BARUA and SRIJUT GIRISH CH. BARUA were examined together. The questions were answered by SRIJUT BIDYADHAR BARUA.)

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q.—You have seen the replies given by Srijut Girish Ch. Barua in the printed replies ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you generally agree with him ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the opium policy has proved a success beyond expectation?

A.—I do not say it is beyond expectation, but it has succeeded. It has proved a success.

Q.—In what way?

A.—It has proved a success as it has stopped the younger generation from taking opium.

Q.—Is that one of the reasons?

A.—Yes. Opium consumption has fallen down.

Q.—Do you know of any opium addicts who have given up taking opium?

A.—Yes. Lots of opium addicts have given up.

Q.—Is it due to this policy?

A.—Not only due to this policy, but also to the temperance movement carried on by the Congress people.

Q.—Is that effect of the Congress movement still continuing?

A.—Yes. There is a strong popular opinion against opium nowadays.

Q.—Do you think that these people who are supposed to have given up the habit have resorted to smuggled opium, or to mahaldar's opium got by shortweight?

A.—Smuggled opium is very small. They purchase from the mahaldars from the latter's savings.

Q.—Do you think that some of the people who have given up the habit go to the mahaldars?

A.—Some people who have given up the opium habit go to the mahaldars. We know many who have given up the habit and not resorted to it again. That is another reason for saying that this policy has proved to be a success.

Q.—Then you suppose that there is not a large number of people who have resorted to any illicit source of supply?

A.—No; not a large number of people.

Q.—Do you know if there is any smuggled opium coming into this district?

A.—Very small quantity may come.

Q.—Have you got any idea about how much is coming in ?

A.—It is very difficult to say. My information is that previously there was smuggling in this district to a very great extent, but nowadays smuggling has gone down almost to nil.

Q.—Have you seen the statement of the Excise Superintendent of Nowgong that this policy has proved to be a failure inasmuch as the decrease in the consumption of Government treasury opium has been more than substituted by opium from illicit sources ?

A.—It is very easy to say, but it is very difficult to substantiate.

Q.—Then this statement of the Excise Superintendent is *not correct ?*

A.—No. It is not correct.

SRIJUT GIRISH CH. BARUA :—It is said by the Excise Superintendent that smuggling in opium exists to a large extent. I speak from my experience as an *ex*-lessee that this statement is not correct.

Q.—Do you advocate continuing of the policy for five years ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Will it not endanger the policy on account of the existence of shortweight sales ?

A.—Certainly. We take exception to the manner in which shortweight sales have been dealt with by Government, we are of opinion that Government should take effective steps and Government could have stopped these if they wished.

Q.—What steps should Government take ?

A.—Put it in tabloid form as some pills, or in phials, or in some liquid form in which homeopathic medicines are given.

Q.—Any other suggestion ?

A.—I should prefer Assamese people to be lessees. I mean educated respectable people with a certain sense of morality.

Q.—Do you advocate appointment of outsiders ?

A.—I totally object to them. They have no sympathy for the people. Mostly these outsiders are responsible for smuggling if there is any and they come here for money.

Q.—What kind of people are they?

A.—It is the up-country people. There are some Marwaris also in it.

Q.—Are there any Chinamen?

A.—Yes, in the Darrang gardens there are Chinamen *mistris*.

Q.—It is then your opinion that the policy has proved to be a success. Do you think that the existence of unregistered consumers would in some way endanger the policy?

A.—It has endangered the policy to some extent because of the shortweight sales.

Q.—It is almost impossible to stop shortweight. Would you advocate the idea of bringing these unregistered consumers under registration?

A.—Certainly not. It has been said both by Government and the people that opium is a vice then why should it be continued?

Q.—The motive behind would be to stop smuggling and illicit practice?

A.—It may be but I think, there are other means by which smuggling can be stopped. You cannot do it by this way—not by opening the register.

Q.—Would you not advocate opening of the register because some consumers might have been missed at the time when registers were opened last time?

A.—I do not think there are such addicts. It is difficult to decide who is a real addict.

Q.—Did you not think that there were some people here in Nowgong, who were addicts for a long time, and who have been missed at the time of registration in 1920?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—You know that registers were thrown open in 1929. At that time there was a notification issued by the Government that at the end of, I think, September 1929, these registers would not be opened any more.

A.—All people applied and all of them got passes. We know that many passes have been issued by the Deputy Commissioner.

Q.—Were you not thrown out ?

A.—For one year I was thrown out.

Q.—How do you know that they do not consume it themselves and that they purchase it for business ?

A.—These persons generally confess to the lessees.

Q.—I suppose there is general intimacy between the lessee and the consumer ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any idea of the number of the unregistered consumers ?

A.—I have dealt with that in question No. 4.

Q.—Do you think that many of them are gentlemen ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—These people knew at the time when the notification was issued by the Government ?

A.—They knew but did not come forward, being ashamed of public opinion.

Q.—Before this agitation in the Council they were not ashamed ?

A.—No. Generally they do not come to the shop themselves ; they used to purchase through some agent.

Q.—Were they ashamed of taking opium previous to the Council resolution in 1921 to stop opium ?

A.—I have no idea. Previous to 1921, I was not in Assam.

Q.—Amongst these unregistered consumers are there young people ?

A.—Many.

Q.—Did they newly acquire the habit ?

A.—Yes. At present such people are few. At the time I was a lessee there were many.

Q.—You sold opium to them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—At what price ?

A.—At the time the price was not very high.

Q.—You carried on shortweight sales ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—To registered or to unregistered consumers ?

A.—Both.

Q —Were the registered consumers satisfied with the reduced ration ?

A.—Yes, they were satisfied

Q,—Do you know that some of them got more than what they should have got ?

A.—Yes, generally in my shop there were about 350 pass-holders and 10 or 12 complained to me about their rations. Others did not complain

Q.—Did they know that you were giving shortweight ?

A.—Yes

Q —Where was your shop ?

A.—At Jakhalabandha and Borjuri

Q —What was the number of registered consumers ?

A.—350

Q.—About how many unregistered consumers ?

A —50

Q.—It will be very interesting if you give some suggestions as to how these shortweight sales can be stopped ?

A —I have given my suggestion.

Q —Have you got any more suggestions than those made in your statement ?

A.—No other suggestions

Q.—Do you think, if Government officers are appointed to sell opium it would help ?

A ... l help, otherwise no ... less the present system ... packets with celluloid paper and it would be less costly.

Q.—Have you heard of the practice of the smuggling of opium ?

A.—I have no experience. I have no personal idea about smuggled opium.

Q.—Did you hear of smuggled opium from other lessees ?

A.—I did not hear from other lessees of this district.

Q —Do you think that smuggled opium is coming into this district ?

A.—I have already replied to that. I have not heard of it in this district.

Mr. DAWSON :—In fact you do not know ?

A.—I do not know.

CHAIRMAN:—There are some people who are registered consumers below the age of 30 or 35. Would you advocate the cancellation of their passes ?

SRIJUT BIDYADHAR BARUA :—In the case of those who have been using opium for the last five years, I do not advocate this.

Q.—Do you advocate this policy of ten per cent. cut ?

A.—It should continue.

Q.—Would it not be tantalising the opium-eaters?

A.—It is not tantalising ; they will get accustomed to this.

Q.—Would you stop it at once ?

A.—I have already said, I would stop it to-day.

Q.—Is it practicable ?

A.—If courage is taken in both hands, it would be practicable.

Q.—Supposing Government continues this policy for five years, would you change the price of the Treasury opium ?

A.—It may remain as it is.

Q.—What steps do you suggest to create effective opinion to stop this opium habit ?

A.—If Government and the public both combine public opinion could very easily be created.

Q.—Would you advise that Deputy Commissioners, Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors, when they go out on tour, should lecture to the people ?

A.—I do not think they need lecture, let them express themselves that they are in favour of opium disappearing. That would be a very effective propaganda.

Q.— Would not that create a suspicion in the minds of the people that Government officers have some ulterior motive ?

A.—I do not think so, because there would be no counter propaganda from outside.

Examined by MR. DAWSON :—You frankly admitted that when you were a lessee you gave shortweight ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why ?

A.—For money.

Q.—Was it because you could not get sufficient net profit otherwise ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you remember how much legal profit you got per seer ?

A.—I cannot say that exactly now.

Q.—How many seers did you sell monthly in the years 1926 to 1929 ?

A.—I think about 12 seers or so.

Q.—But you cannot tell me what your net profit was ?

A.—I do not exactly remember. But I can say that the Government profit was not enough. Besides there is a tendency to get money when there is an opportunity.

Q.—I think in your statement you said that these shops should be settled with the Assamese ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would this help to check shortweight sales ?

A.—With the present method it is useless.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Why do you want Assamese.

A.—If they are appointed smuggling would be less. They are not so clever in smuggling opium from outside.

CHAIRMAN :—Do you mean that the Assamese have not outside connection ?

A.—Yes, they have outside connection. But they are not so clever.

MR. DAWSON :—Do you think that there is a considerable number of unregistered consumers at present ?

A.—At the time of writing the reply, I thought that 10 per cent. of the total consumers might be unregistered consumers ; but now after consulting many persons and lessees, I am definitely of opinion that about 6 or 7 per cent., are unregistered consumers. This is due to economic difficulties.

CHAIRMAN :—Supposing the economic condition improves, as we all hope it will, will the number of unregistered consumers also increase ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Take the case of Mikir Hills. They are not purchasing the full ration on account of economic depression. Do you think, if the economic condition improves, these people will increase their rations ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The real remedy would be to tell the people that it is bad to take opium ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Until you make good propaganda, you will not weed out the evil ?

A.—If you do not give them opium you will stop the habit.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—You say that you sold your savings mostly to unregistered consumers ?

A.—To both.

Q.—In the majority of cases, you sold to unregistered consumers ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Supposing these unregistered consumers were given passes, would you have been able to dispose of shortweight savings ?

A.—Then I would have created a new market in outside places where there is a demand.

Q.—If there had been no unregistered consumers round about your shop, then you would have been compelled to take it outside for sale ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why do the registered consumers ask for more opium ?

A.—They fall ill ; or when he asks for more, he thinks he requires more opium at that time. Therefore, he takes more quantity than the normal. This I am speaking from my personal knowledge.

Q.—Government is reducing this opium ration by 10 per cent. each year. Do you think that opium-eaters are habituating themselves to this reduction ?

A.—For a day or two they may feel difficulty.

Q.—Can they remain satisfied ultimately ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Will they be satisfied ?

A.—The whole thing is : if you give them more opium they would certainly want more. That is the case with all intoxicating drugs.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY—

Q.—When you had a shop, were you in the habit of purchasing smuggled opium ?

A.—No.

Q.—Your supply was about 12 seers ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What was the amount of savings at the end of the month that you got out of these 12 seers ?

A.—About $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. But my salesman used to cut something more for his own use.

Q.—You say you had 50 non-consumers ?

A.—Yes, about that number.

Q.—All this $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. you sold to these 50 people ?

A.—Yes; also to casual consumers. I supplied some to registered consumers and some to non-registered consumers. The casual consumers took it for *kanikhowas* (opium consumers) in festive occasions. During this time they require more.

Q.—How many non-consumers had this amount of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. divided between them ?

A.—About 50 or so.

Q.—Did you make any adulteration besides giving short-weight ?

A.—No. When I saw the case of Domai I came to my senses, and from that time I made enquiries about opium-eaters and treated them justly.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—There are some people who take opium on festive occasions and not on other occasions ?

A.—Yes; that is in the *Hatidhara* and *Bihu.* The superstition is this: whenever an elephant is caught some opium must be smoked in honour by *kanikhowas*

Q.—How much do they consume ?

A.—That depends on the number of people consuming. Generally they smoke it.

Q.—They are not in the habit of eating opium ?

A.—They generally smoke on such occasions.

CHAIRMAN :—Do you know that some people smoke opium ?

A.—I have no personal knowledge.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Do you think that the policy of reduction should not be given effect to in the case of confirmed addicts whose age is 40 ?

A.—It should be given effect to The cut should continue irrespective of the age of the man.

Q.—You are not in favour of bringing in unregistered veteran opium-eaters?

A.—Unregistered opium-eaters are not veterans.

Q.—How do you propose to help them in buying opium?

A.—They should not buy.

Q.—Have you any idea of the present price paid by the unregistered men?

A.—I have no idea, but I have heard that prices have gone down due to economic depression.

Q.—Would it be three times more than the treasury price?

A.—Not now; they might have been in the time of the boom.

Q.—Do you think that the price of illicit opium has gone down temporarily?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You admit that it has gone down temporarily?

A.—I do not know whether it is temporary or not.

Q.—Do you think that a medical certificate is a sure guide to determine whether a man is an addict or not?

A.—I do not think that the doctor can safely say when a man wants opium. It is not a safe guide.

Q.—Can you suggest any means by which passes can be secured for actually needy persons?

A.—All the needy persons have already got passes. But whoever has acquired the habit newly. he should give it up, and should not get a pass.

Q.—Are you of opinion that those young people who are now taking opium without obtaining passes are not really opium-eaters?

A.—They are not really opium-eaters. But there will be very few, say, about 10, who are real opium-eaters.

Q—So would you have an enquiry by the Deputy Commissioner or by non-officials with a view to ascertain whether they are needy persons?

A.—I do not think this enquiry is to their interest.

Q.—Am I to understand that this policy should continue and that there should be no fresh issue on any account?

A.—That is my view. If a man is ailing, he can go to the doctor and get a prescription.

Q.—But if a man wants opium on account of old age or dysentery for a long time?

A.—It is not to his interest.

Q.—Have you any personal knowledge that veteran opium-eaters have stopped the habit of taking opium?

A.—I have already said so.

Q.—Does he not suffer in health?

A.—On the other hand he improves in health.

Q.—Do you mean to say that this opium habit can be very easily cured?

A.—If it is earnestly and honestly tried, it can be cured.

Q.—Were you a visitor of the Jail?

A.—Yes; not now.

Q.—Have you met an opium-eater to whom opium was not supplied but who was a convict?

A.—In case of every convict, opium is stopped

Q.—Are you sure of this? I have also been a jail visitor in Dibrugarh. Things are different?

A.—My experience is also different.

SRIJUT MOTI RAM BORA:—I was also in jail for some time. I know of opium-eaters; they are given no opium.

Q.—But political convicts are different?

A.—I am not talking of political convicts. I am talking of other convicts who are not getting opium.

Q.—I think you have already said this ten per cent. reduction is causing no hardship at all?

A.—It is causing no hardship.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—

Q.—You said that very little opium was smuggled and that the Excise Superintendent's statement was not true? May I know how you came to this conclusion?

A.—It is quite obvious. If more opium was smuggled and if Excise officers knew it, they should have detected it. If they did not do so, how can they claim that there is smuggled opium?

Q.—May I know why Excise officers are very eager to make out a case for smuggling?

A.—For their own existence

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—I think, you will admit that it is a common practice to sell opium in short-weight.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know why the mahaldars are not detected ?

A.—I do not know why this question is asked of me. Everybody knows that mahaldars sell shortweight.

Q.—Have you any objection to speaking more plainly as to why it is not checked ?

A.—There are some reasons behind it.

Q.—What are the reasons ?

A.—The Excise staff can be easily influenced.

MR. ROFFEY :—Have you ever bribed an Excise officer ?

A.—No.

SRIJUT BIDYADHAR BARUA :—It is generally known that Excise officers are easily influenced by the mahaldars.

Q.—There are black sheep in the Excise Department ?

A.—That department is so bad nowadays that is difficult to pick out good people. There may be some, but the general impression is against them.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—At what rate did you sell shortweight ?

A.—I gave 14 annas instead of 16 annas.

Q.—You had a free hand and no one detected your shop during the continuation of four years you had been a lessee ?

A.—They detected when I was a lessee.

Q.—How many times ?

A.—3 or 4 times.

Q.—Were you fined heavily in each case ?

A.—Not in each case, but I was fined heavily.

Q.—Was this the reason why you lost the shop ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say definitely that you have not offered any bribe ?

A.—I have not offered any bribe.

Q.—Are you the only person amongst the lessees who used to do this business of shortweight, or do you know of any other lessee doing the same thing ?

A.—If there were no shortweight sales, the charm of taking a shop would be lost.

Q.—Your opinion is that the supply of opium from Government treasury should be immediately stopped if possible?

A.—If possible, it should be stopped at once.

Q.—In case of persons who are under a certain age; is this your view?

A.—Yes; say 40 years; but I have since heard from many people that 50 years should be the age.

Q.—Otherwise the present policy should be continued?

A.—Yes. No new passes should be issued.

No. 3.

(After lunch).

(CAPTAIN J. M. SIKDAR, Civil Surgeon, was examined by the CHAIRMAN)—

Q.—We would like to get your idea generally regarding several of the questions from the standpoint of the medical profession. I take it that you have read the questionnaire.

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you think of the opium policy of ten per cent. annual reduction? Do you think that it has met with success or with failure?

A.—I think, it is a success, though not to the full extent as desired.

Q.—In what way do you suppose it has been a success?

A.—In reducing the quantity of sales and the number of consumers.

Q.—Do you think that there are consumers who have given up the habit?

A.—Yes, there are some who have given up their habit. Mostly it may be on account of economic depression. It may also be partly due to the policy of ten per cent. cut adopted by the Government.

Q.—Do you think that due to this policy the younger generation are being prevented from taking to opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know if there is any smuggled opium coming into this district ?

A.—Yes, there is smuggling and smuggled opium is coming into the district. I have got a convict in the jail ; he is a Chinaman, Lumchung by name. He has been convicted to one year's rigorous imprisonment.

Q.—Any other case ?

A.—No other at present.

Q.—Supposing we continue this ten per cent. reduction policy, do you think that smuggling will go on ?

A.—Not to an alarming extent.

Q.—At least, in your opinion, it will not endanger the policy if we continue the cut ?

A.—I agree.

Q.—You have some consumers in the jail ?

A.—Yes ; only two now.

Q.—Do you give opium to them ?

A.—No ; not at all.

Q.—Do not they suffer for want of opium ?

A.—In some obstinate cases, they suffer for a day or two from abdominal diarrhœa.

Q.—What did you do then ? Did you give tincture of opium ?

A.—No. We gave hot vapour bath and purgative. There is a new treatment—Modino's treatment—by which serum is injected by applying blister over the person of the addict, and by applying serum injection for three days at intervals.

Q.—Do you know if it has been tried any where ?

A.—I cannot say. I got a circular on the 1st of this month; it was signed by Col. Cameron on the 16th May and I received it here on the 1st. From what I read, I find that after that treatment the addict gets a distaste for opium,—not only for opium, but also for all kinds of intoxicants. That is the latest treatment.

CHAIRMAN:—You know, or you have heard, of the practice of short weight sales.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you advocate Government officers or the Medical Department to sell opium?

A.—I think it would be better if that can be arranged.

Examined by MR. DAWSON—

Q.—Supposing a man was sent to you by the Deputy Commissioner for a certificate as to whether he was an opium-eater or not, would you find it difficult to decide?

A.—Yes, but not in all cases. In the case of a long standing confirmed addict, even a layman can say that he is an opium-eater. But in cases of recent habits it is very difficult, and the doctors cannot make out in the case of a youngster unless he is kept under observation for a week or two.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN—

Q.—Have you any experience, and can you tell us, whether convicts take to the opium habit again after they are released?

A.—This is very difficult to say for me. I think they again take to the habit. It may not be in all cases, but some of them probably take to the habit.

Q.—So these convicts are forced to give up the habit under compulsion when they are in the jail?

A.—Yes. But their health does not deteriorate; they are discharged with better health.

Q.—The tendency is that they may again take to the habit?

A.—Yes, when they get opium again.

Q.—You have not tried the new treatment yet and you cannot say whether it is a permanent cure or not?

A.—I hope it will be a permanent cure from what I have read of it. The treatment consists of serum being injected into him

Examined by MR. ROFFEY—

Q.—You said that if a man was knocked off his opium, he would not suffer?

A.—He would suffer for the first few days.

Q.—Would he suffer very much?

A.—Not very much.

Q.—Take the case of the Chinaman now in jail. Was he an opium-eater?

A.—He was not an opium-eater. He was convicted of smuggling opium. But I have got two other opium-eaters in the jail.

Q.—Were they addicts ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did they suffer ?

A.—Yes ; in the beginning they complained of disorder of the bowels, but not after that.

Q.—Do you say, if the cut is continued, smuggling would increase ?

A.—Smuggling is going on in every country.

Q.—How are the opium-eaters going to get the opium they need if the cut is continued ?

A.—They will have to give it up.

Q.—You do not think they will get smuggled opium ?

A.—If this is strictly restricted, they will give it up.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—You were Superintendent of the Jorhat Jail ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you give any opium to your convicts there ?

A.—No ; occasionally Tincture Opii in some cases was given.

Q.—Was that given instead of opium ?

A.—We never give opium in the jail.

Q.—Can this habit be cured by drugs ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Permanently or temporarily ?

A.—I think permanently. It depends also upon the will of the person.

Q.—But have you tried ?

A.—Yes, in the Jail. They have to give it up for years to come. Those who are convicted for two or three years are not getting any opium even if they are addicts.

Q.—How many outlying dispensaries have you got in Nowgong.

A.—Eleven.

Q.—Do you often go out to inspect them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you meet any opium-eater in the interior ?

A.—Very seldom.

Q.—Do they come to you for opium passes ?

A.—Yes, they come to me at the headquarters.

Q.—Directly to you ?

A.—Not directly. They apply to the Excise staff. Then the application goes to the Deputy Commissioner ; the Deputy Commissioner forwards it to me.

Q.—Do you generally reject all the applications ?

A.—Not all ; I reject those that come from people below forty years of age.

Q.—What about the others ?

A.—In the other cases, I allow in the case of those who are confirmed addicts.

MR. E. S ROFFEY :—Cannot any person under 40 be a confirmed addict ?

A.—There are. Still I think, they can give up their habit easily.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—You are fully aware of the reduction policy of the Government ?

A.—Yes

Q.—Do you not think that this gradual cut is doing a great harm to the mass ?

A.—I do not think so. It is doing good to the mass

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—

Q.—So there is no risk of any loss of life ?

A.—Absolutely none. Even though an opium-eater may not be placed under medical treatment, if he gives up the opium habit there is no risk of his life. In the case of confirmed addicts, those who are very aged, say above 50 or 60, there may be a risk of life. If they are not treated after they are compelled to give up the habit they may develop the habit. If properly treated, he may develop diarrhœa or eventually he may succumb.

Q.—In the case of those who have acquired this habit recently, is it difficult to say whether they are opium-eaters or not ?

A.—Yes it is difficult.

Q.—But in the case of those who are confirmed you can easily detect them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Nowadays you give certificates ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In all cases do you give certificates ?

A.—Those whom I consider are confirmed addicts and who have no hope of giving up the habit—I give certificates to them.

Q.—Are you to give passes in those cases where opium is necessary for the preservation of health ?

A.—That is not the present rule.

Q.—According to the present rule, there is no question of health ?

A.—No.

No. 4.

The Committee next examined MAULAVI MUHAMMAD ROUFIQUE.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN —

Q.—Have you submitted any statement ?

A.—I submitted a statement yesterday.

Examined by MR. DAWSON —

Q.—You say in your answer to question No. 9 : "To save ignorant and poor people of the whole area from this ruinous opium habit, registration policy ought to be strictly adhered to, allowing reasonable quantity in each case". What exactly do you mean ? Will you explain ?

A.—I mean the register should be re-opened, and new passes should be issued once for all. There should be no further opening periodically.

Q.—How long would you keep the register open in the hill areas ?

A.—It should be opened after a declaration saying that within six months they should apply, and those who apply within that time should be registered and should not be further rationed.

Q.—Why do you make this distinction between hills and plains areas ?

A.—The reduction policy has been successful in the plains districts, because there has been public opinion behind it; the people are educated, and there is a great force of public opinion. These factors have contributed a great deal to the success of the present policy. Also, the slump in trade. But in the hill areas people are uneducated—they are given to superstitious habits and there is no public opinion. Also the slump is not very much felt because of the presence of the barter system.

Q.—What have they to barter in the hill area ?

A.—Formerly they were paid in money but now they get opium in exchange of products.

Q.—Have you any personal knowledge that they barter in exchange for opium ?

A.—It is an open secret; I have no personal knowledge. It is surplus opium which finds its way to the hills rather than to the plains districts which is used for barter.

Q.—You advocate allowing them a reasonable quantity in the hills, but not in the plains. Why do you make this distinction ?

A.—The reduction has been in force in the plains, but not in the hills. Further reduction is to be fixed in consultation with the Civil Surgeon or the Deputy Commissioner, because that amount is given for his whole life.

Q.—Would you fix some amount in consultation with Civil Surgeon whether or not it is necessary for his health ?

A.—Yes; the Civil Surgeon should be consulted as to whether they want it.

Q.—Why should not the Civil Surgeon fix the rations for the plains men also ?

A.—If you do not give it in the hills, they will get from illicit source. But the case is not so in the plains, because the source is very limited. Only surplus opium is distributed in the plains whereas in the hills not only surplus but also smuggled opium is distributed.

Q.—You say that opium is not smuggled into the p[illegible]

A.—I think so.

Q.—Do you think there are many unregistered consumers?
A.—There are some.

Q.—What do you mean by some?

A.—I have no particular idea.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN—

Q.—According to your rough estimate you give the figure of unregistered consumers at 2,000?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Will there be 2,000 unregistered consumers in the district?

A.—It is my rough estimate. I have said in my statement that I cannot be accurate.

Q.—Would you like that these two thousand consumers should be brought on the register or at least a portion?

A.—I do not want that they should be registered as consumers; I want that they should be persuaded to give it up.

Q.—How would you persuade them?

A.—It is a question which I have answered in my replies. It should be left to propaganda. The present slump is the most opportune time for such a propaganda to be successful.

Q.—Is there a demand from all the 2,000 unregistered consumers?

A.—All are not consumers; some take as consumers, some take for other purposes.

Q.—Shall we take half as representing unregistered consumers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that if there is a demand from one thousand men, shortweight sales will still further increase?

A.—But shortweight sales should be stopped. When there is a demand, the tendency is for shortweight sales to increase. Shortweight sales have affected the present policy to some extent; this should be checked.

Q.—Take it the other way. There is a demand for opium and the mahaldars are forced to give shortweight.

A.—But I am speaking the other way. The mahaldar should stop shortweight sales.

Q.—That is one way of looking at it But I speak of it from the other way. That is, if there is such a big demand, the mahaldars would give shortweight more and more ?

A.—It is so no doubt.

Q.—That is also one reason why shortweight is prevailing ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would it not be better to give passes so that they may get opium licitly.

A.—That will undo the cut that we have made so far.

Q.—All the good work ?

A.—Now the impression is again abroad that you want to stop the opium habit.

Q.—But the policy has defeated its own object.

A.—I do not agree that it has defeated its own object. I agree that it has been affected to some extent, but this could be prevented by checking *shortweight* sales.

Q.—What about reduction ? Do you think people are habituated to the reductions ?

A.—Yes, during these five years they have prepared themselves for the reduction. My impression is that they do not want more than what they are given. In some cases, it is reported to me that they make a business of it.

Q.—Do you know that some registered consumers also purchase these shortweight savings ?

A.—There may be some cases.

Q.—What do they purchase it for ?

A.—Probably it may be for their own consumption.

Q.—Then they are not quite content with their present reduction ?

A.—In some cases there may be discontent.

Examined by MR. ROFFEY —

Q.—You say that registered consumers do not want more at the present time ?

A.—It has been reported to me.

Q.—If the reduction is carried on, then in five years more, they would not have anything to get. Do you think that they would want more opium ?

A.—Up to now they are satisfied with the reduced quantity that they are getting, and we do not know what will after five years.

Q.—Next year do you consider they will be satisfied with a further reduction ?

A.—I think so.

Q.—You do not think that they would look elsewhere for the opium that they did not receive from the Government ?

A.—I do not think that there would be a general clamour for opium. There may be some stray cases merely.

Q.—How many registered consumers are there in the Nowgong district ?

MR. DAWSON :—It is 10,996.

Q.—I want to know how you base your two thousand unregistered consumers ?

A.—I base it from the actual consumption, taking about 10 tolas per head per annum and I take shortweight to be 25 per cent.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—You say that the present price should continue. What is your reason ?

A.—It will not serve the object of the policy to raise it.

Q.—But if we raised the price, it would be very difficult for the people to get opium ?

A.—Then you would be introducing competition between smuggled and treasury opium.

Q.—Is it not going on even now ?

A.—I am not aware of such competition now ; on the other hand the high price of smuggled opium shows that there is no competition.

Q.—If you raise the price of treasury opium, there is bound to be a keen competition. What is the price paid for smuggled opium ?

A.—I have given it in my statement—before the slump it was Rs. 4 to Rs. 6 per tola ; now it is from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 4.

Q.—Then it is higher than the treasury opium ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Will it do any harm if the price is reduced now ?

A.—If you introduce the packet system, you will have to increase the price to cover the extra cost.

Q.—Then would you not make it more difficult ?

A.—Yes ; that is the advantage, otherwise there is no harm. I have no sympathy for the opium-eater. The difficulty is that by trying to make the price prohibitive you increase the other risks.

Q.—Like every other habit, opium-eaters also have a tendency to crave for more if more is available?

A.—Yes. That is why I say that the reduction policy should continue. Make opium more and more scarce

Q.—In course of time, do you think that the habit will go?

A.—We hope so.

Q.—You say, there is smuggling in the hill areas?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do you say so?

A.—I tried to find it from the figures of Nowgong. Here I find that there are 2,000 unregistered opium-eaters and that they can have their supply from shortweight sales. The figure quoted by the Deputy Commissioner is 2,500 and there is very little difference. It appears there is no room for smuggled opium in the plains; on the other hand, it seems that opium is smuggled into hill areas. There are certain detections in certain cases, and opium finds an easy way to hill areas where distribution is also safe.

Q.—In the hill areas there is no restriction?

A.—There is no restriction.

Q.—And there is no reduction?

A.—There is the pass system.

Q.—Anyone who wishes can have a pass?

A.—Yes

MR. DAWSON:—It is not strictly correct. He has to satisfy the Deputy Commissioner. It would not be fair to say that passes can be had for the mere asking.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—If the price of licit opium is higher than the price of illicit opium, do you think that the Mikirs will purchase the licit opium.

A.—The bulk of the smuggled opium is bartered. It may be that in kind they are paying a higher price.

Q.—Is your calculation based on the fact that the surplus of shortweight is 25 per cent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the average is 25 per cent or will it be only 12½ per cent.?

A.—Twenty-five per cent. is my idea. In the average case, when they sell 1 tola, the mahaldar may give 2 annas less and 4 annas would be a big reduction; but in sales of opium of less than a tola they give shortweight to a greater extent. If y-

calculate, it sometimes exceeds 4 annas. At times, the amount is 6 annas and goes up even to 8 annas; therefore I say that I am not wrong in calculating that the average is 4 annas.

Q.—Even if the average is 12½ per cent. then it would serve 1,000 unregistered consumers instead of 2,000, and the others will have smuggled opium which would not be very much?

A.—Yes, there will be smuggling.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Have you any practical experience to place before this Committee as to why you should give two views on the same matter as regards the opening of registers in the hill areas and in the plains districts?

A.—I have already said that.

Q.—But I am asking whether you have got any concrete instances of your practical experience?

A.—That is my view.

Q.—And that view is based on the figures taken from the books?

A.—Yes, I based my views on the figures of admitted facts.

Q.—You have in a manner admitted that there are 2,000 unregistered consumers. Have you any idea as to what rate these consumers pay to the lessees and what are the sources they get their supplies from?

A.—I have said that they get it from shortweight.

Q—Can you give any idea about the rates they pay?

A—I have answered it already.

Q.—In view of the figures of unregistered consumers that you have mentioned now, do you think that this exorbitant price paid by these consumers has ruined the mass of the people?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—The treasury price is Rs. 2 a tola, whereas you admitted that these people have to pay a larger amount. That it is a hardship to them. Has it not ruined the mass of the people?

A.—I admit that there is a hardship to opium-eaters, but their habit is responsible for the hardship.

Q.—Has it not turned them into abject poverty?

A.—Their habit is responsible for it.

Q.—They cannot pay their land revenue, and they have somehow got to find funds for purchasing opium at such a high price?

A.—It has certainly injured them economically. But they will be injured whether they purchase licit or illicit opium.

Q.—Will it not be better for something to be done to improve their condition?

A.—Yes, they should be persuaded to give up the habit.

Q.—Can this be done immediately?

A.—It cannot be done immediately, but you have five years' time to carry on propaganda amongst the people.

Q. Do you not think that the policy of reduction should not be given effect to in the cases of confirmed addicts—I mean among the unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—I say, instead of bringing them into the register, it is better to have propaganda to make them leave the habit.

Q.—Can you suggest in how many years it could be done?

A.—I cannot give you a time-limit. All I can say is that it will achieve the object, because propaganda has a greater force in achieving your object than any other means.

Q.—Do you think that a confirmed addict of 40 years cannot at once give up the habit?

A.—That is for the medical men to say, but what I say is that they should not be given opium.

Q.—You say so from your experience?

A.—There is no question of experience here. It is my view.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Do you think that this propaganda should be conducted by officials?

A.—It should be, for, Government is in a better position. But there should be co-operation between officials and non-officials. I cannot give you a definite scheme.

Q.—Do you think that this policy should be given up now?

A.—It should continue as it will come to its natural end five years after. At the same time propaganda should go on so that unregistered consumers may give it up.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You know a lot—I use the word "lot" advisedly—you know a lot of opium consumers have now been compelled to give up the habit on account of economy?

A.—Yes; as well as on account of the force of public opinion.

Q.—Would you not take advantage of the present situation to recommend that opium should immediately be stopped?

A.—By what means? By legislation?

Q.—Say, by executive order. It should not be supplied to people under 40 years of age?

A.—This is an attractive suggestion for impatient reformers, but as a practical proposition I do not think it could be done.

Q.—Now, we know, there is a large percentage of people taking much less opium than they used to have. For instance, where about 25 seers of opium used to be sold, only 3 seers are now sold, and this is due to economic difficulties. Would it not be well to take advantage of this economic depression and at once stop supply to those under 45 where there is no danger to life?

A.—I should like to take advantage of the slump to start propaganda work so that they might give up the habit without having recourse to legislation or executive orders. It is better to make them realise their mistake instead of forcing them to give up the habit.

Q.—You approve of the 10 per cent. cut policy, which is an executive order?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is independent of any propaganda work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If you want to stop the evil, would you not stop it altogether now?

A.—I do not think it is necessary. You have only 5 years more, and at the end of it your object will be achieved. If you stop the supply at once, you may be giving an opportunity to smugglers, and the situation may become tenser.

Q.—Smugglers have a worse time of it now than they would when the economic conditions improve?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The illicit opium is not fully sold?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So, if you stop now, we are in a better position and the smugglers would not get a chance of selling; but if you wait for five years, then the economic condition will improve and the people will be able to buy?

A.—The smugglers may not get the price they used to get, although they may get the market; but now people have got little money to purchase opium. Is there any guarantee that they would not use this money for purchasing opium?

Q.—Do you think that the policy in the hills is likely to nterfere with the reduction policy in the plains?

A.—I do not see why it should affect.

Q.—If a man can get a pass easily in the opium to the plains?

A.—I have never heard of a case the hills into the plains. But I have heard

Q —Five years hence when you plains, a man can go to the hills, get reduction, and he can send opium into

A.—Perhaps.

Q.—There is no difficulty in addict in the hills?

A —There is some difficulty; he If a Mikir wants it, he could get Commissioner

Q —He can get the quantity he

A.—Yes, but they do not take passes. They find opium at their own

Q.—You say, they do not take out

A.—Yes.

Q.—Because they have to go a long

A.—Yes.

Q —Do you say that officers are not to the hills?

A.—Supervision and vigilance are geographical position.

Q.—Are there foreign traders?

A.—Yes. There are few Assamese Hills

CHAIRMAN:—You suggest that open the register. We have to give them you aware that in 1929 there was a areas as well as to the plains areas, and also that after the 30th September be issued, and that notification was country. In view of this fact, do you the register now, so that the unr in?

A.—So far as the Mikir H come; even if they do not chance.

Q.—Will you give them

A.—No, there will be be easy to tackle the problem

DR: SMITH :—I think about 4 rupees.

Q.—Why do they pay so much?

A.—One does generally pay highly for illegal favours.

Q.—It cannot be obtained very easily I suppose?

A.—Yes, as I said, if you get the money to pay.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Why is the price so high?

MR. LORNIE :—Simply because they want to make profit out of it. The vendor has got to make a profit.

Q.—Then opium from outside the shop is not available?

A.—Yes, it is.

MR. ROFFEY :—Have you any objection if this cut is carried on?

A.—No. But I have an alternative arrangement for the tea gardens and that is, if you open up the register for those people that are not registered at present they should be certified as far as our gardens are concerned by the Medical Officer in charge, and then we should submit the indent signed by the Medical Officer and receive the indents direct from the Government once a month or once in a stated period. This supply should be in sealed packets supplied by Government. Just the same procedure I would suggest for running the shops. The Government should appoint their own salaried men and there should be no question of gain; and also Government should appoint committees in each area consisting of 7 members—Hindus, Muhammadans and Europeans if available for each area, and I would suggest a Medical Officer in the committee. These men should have powers to report to the Excise Commissioner any irregularity in the sale of these packets. Opium should be supplied in packets and sufficient quantity for their needs should be indented for the approved addicts in the district. Tea garden labour addicts could be examined independently through the Medical Officer. You should do away with the auction system altogether, because this auction system is very much abused. I have satisfied myself recently that this short-weight business does exist. I know of cases where several Mikirs went to a shop the other day for opium rations, and when they returned with their rations, I weighed the quantity they got, and found that they got only 2/3rds of what was supposed to be supplied to them. [illegible]his proportio[illegible] [illegible]qual in each case

and out of eight annas worth of opium I found them all getting to the extent one-third less. The vendor makes another reduction afterwards. He is able to make cent. per cent. profit. There was one Mikir in particular who had bought twelve annas worth but when weighed I found it was exactly eight annas.

Mr. DAWSON :—What the shopkeeper would say is that the garden is far away and that on the way the Mikir must have consumed a portion on the road?

Mr. LORNIE :—How can that be in the case of all the 12 men all of whom only got two-thirds? It is very easy to send a man to the shop to buy opium and to prove the short-weight. It should not be difficult.

Mr. ROFFEY —Have you personally cured any of these opium-eaters?

Dr. SMITH :—No.

Mr LORNIE :—One is supposed to have been cured in our garden now. He was an addict for 42 years. My clerk says that he has given up opium but he has taken to drinking.

Mr. DAWSON :—Would you rather have an opium-eater in your garden or a drinker?

A.—Rather a drinker, because they are better workers.

Q.—Supposing in a garden of 1,200 men you have 150 addicts, what would you do to cure them?

A.—I should do as I suggest. I should give them a certain amount and Government should reduce their rations jointly. The Medical Officer could keep them under observation. The doctor could do this in the case of both pass-holders and non-pass-holders and see whether they are addicts or not. I believe he could easily tell that

Q.—Supposing they were addicts. What action would you take to cure them?

A.—I would carry on with the policy, but not cut the ration straight away because I want work done. Up to 50 years we can try to cure. I have already suggested that the Manager should also combine with the Medical Officer, and both of them should certify whether they are addicts, and then the indents must be made out and submitted to Government.

Examined by Srijut BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI—

Q.—You suggest that in some areas the supply should be totally stopped?

A.—Within so many years, yes. I would also suggest the same for other excise shops. If a committee is appointed, I suggest they should have the power to report any irregularities to the Excise Commissioner direct.

Q.—Do you mean to suggest that it should be stopped, if we begin now, within the next five years?

A.—I would not say that. I would only say that at present the policy is being absolutely defeated by this practice of short-weight sales.

Q.—If your scheme be adopted now, within how many years do you propose to stop it?

A.—I would not say five years, but I should say probably 10 years. I would really leave it to the doctor.

MR. ROFFEY:—Supposing you have 150 addicts out of a population of 1,200, how would you treat them?

DR. SMITH:—It depends on how many people you can put under treatment at a time. But you must have the patient's co-operation in the matter. That is essential. Then you can put him in the hospital to cure him. When he gets out, if he is supplied he will resort to it again as long as opium is easily available. It would be very difficult to have a lasting cure.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—In the garden, opium is not easily available, and if your scheme should be followed, then how long a period would you take to cure them?

MR. LORNIE:—It would not take long if the outside sources are also stopped.

DR. SMITH:—It can be cured within a week, I suppose. You can have them in hospital and substitute other things for opium. They will have to remain for at least a month.

Q.—If you reduce their rations and the reduction goes on for 5 years, and then you stop altogether, can you cure them completely?

A.—I cannot say.

MR. LORNIE:—Some of them may have reduced their consumption. A number of men came to me at my request and I remember that one of them was over 60 and he put down his age as being under 50. He is a man who has stopped buying the reduced quantity. Some people are not able to buy the illicit stuff and already they have got a fifty per cent. cut; they have got no other alternative. The Government cut 10 per cent. and the vendors cut another 10 per cent.

MR. ROFFLY —Would you like that the evil should go?

A —Yes!

MR ROFFEY —May I know of what ages these people are —35 30 or what?

MR LORNIE :—I do not remember the ages, but I think there are some under 25 in my garden.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—Are they all Oriyas?

A.—They may be from all parts. Recently I have got one from Orissa These people come without a pass and they get a pass here They take to the habit in their own country; they do not start it here. In the majority of cases, it is like that.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA —

Q —Are you the Chairman of the local branch of the Tea Association?

A.—I am the Vice-Chairman

Q —You said that the policy was a failure May I know in what way?

A —The reduction policy has been a success to a very little extent This is due to the vendor, because the ration has been cut largely by him. He has cut 50 per cent and the Government policy is only a 10 per cent cut

Q —Is that the reason for which you say that the policy is a failure?

A —That is one of the reasons Also there is too much bribery and corruption in the department from the very beginning This is why I put forward this idea of supervision by a committee

Q —Do you mean by that that lack of supervision is responsible for the shortweight, and that it has increased, as this is a profitable business?

A —Yes.

Q.—You mean lack of supervision by the Excise staff?

A.—Yes You require about 3 or 4 times the present number of people even guaranteeing that every man was honest.

Q —The failure was not due to the fault of the people themselves?

A.—No I do not think so. They have not been consulted in the matter. Some of them are certainly given rations which it was never intended they should have

Q.—Are you bringing unregistered consumers into the register with a view to help them not to pay exorbitant price?

A.—I would say, it would be a partial success if my scheme is adopted in the tea gardens.

Q.—You are also of the opinion that the scheme may be extended to areas outside tea garden limits?

A.—These opium vendors may be appointed by Government from respectable men, and the number of shops should be reduced.

Q.—Do you recommend the existing system of having shops?

A.—I am not in favour of it.

Q.—Do you know that the issues of opium would not be increased by opening new shops, because the registered consumers would only be transferred from one place to another and the total amount issued by Government would be the same?

A.—I am suggesting cutting down the shops. I would cut both Koliabor and Jaklabandha. I would cut out also the Misa shop and keep the existing one at Borjuri.

Q.—Why?

A.—It will make it more difficult to get opium because the farther the shop is situated, the more the chances of consumers given up the habit?

Q.—Do you refer to unregistered consumers?

A.—I refer to both registered and unregistered consumers.

Q.—Why do you want to penalise these men by making them walk 30 miles and leave their work in the gardens?

A.—I am talking of the areas outside tea gardens. As regards gardens, they will be left. I think also that Government would not be losing revenue by following the system. The people will become more industrious than at present. I think opium could be supplied in pill form. We have got the toffey machine.

THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—Some experts say that opium cannot be made into pills as it is very soft.

A.—What about sticky toffey?

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Do I understand from your views that the register should be opened for tea garden unregistered opium-eaters and that the same should be extended to areas outside also ?

A.—I think so.

Q.—May I know for how many years you are in the tea garden ?

DR. SMITH.—For six years.

Q.—In Nowgong ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Previous to this you were in some other district ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say that this opium habit can be cured by drugs ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you tried curing in the gardens ?

A.—I have seen cases in the Hospitals at Home.

Q.—Do you often meet Mikirs in the gardens ?

A.—Yes. Some gardens do employ Mikirs.

Q.—Are they opium-eaters ?

A.—They generally live in their villages and come to work in the garden. I have no dealings with them at all.

Q.—You believe that addicts can be cured ?

A.—I believe so provided it is made difficult for them to obtain opium once they are cured. If registers are opened, the applications for being registered should come before a committee for the issue of passes.

Q.—Do you suggest that a committee should issue new passes ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You suggest a committee consisting of the Medical Officer and a few non-officials ?

A.—Yes. I think, if an applicant claims that he is an addict he should be asked to produce certificates from two dependable witnesses. Unless you can keep a man under observation it is not possible for a doctor to certify him.

Q.—You suggest this even for addicts of 40 years and over ?

A.—I think such men have passes now.

CHAIRMAN.—But from a medical standpoint would you give passes to younger men, say of 30 or 35 years.

A.—I would keep him in hospital first and try first to cure him. I do not think a man under 30 should have a p[illegible] there is some special reason for it.

Examined by SRIJUT MOHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—I daré say, you know the present policy of Government. It was started five years ago in 1928, and the policy was to reduce rations of all persons under 50 years of age.

MR. LORNIE :—Yes.

Q.—*You agree with the policy ?*

A.—Yes, to some extent.

Q.—You consider it would meet with success if the outside sources of supply is stopped ?

A.—Absolutely, I think so.

Q.—The illicit sources are generally from the mahaldars from savings by shortweight ?

A.—In this district, yes.

Q.—It is the only danger you see ?

A.—Yes, it defeats the policy.

Q.—If this could be stopped by some means, I mean the shortweight sales, then the policy is a very desirable one ?

A.—Positively.

Q.—The present policy of the Government is not to issue new passes permanently. At least on one occasion in 1929, it was generally notified that no more passes should be issued. Before that this system of registration was going on. The idea was that new addicts would not come in ?

A.—Yes But there are so many people now who are non-pass-holders but who are addicts. It would be very hard on them.

Q.—At some time or other you must close the register if you want to wipe out the evil ?

A.—I would open the register from time to time.

Q.—At one time you must close the register. Supposing I open it now, and five years after the same argument as is now advanced is brought out to re-open the register again ?

A.—I do not think so. If you get your opium properly and honestly deal with and distribute it, as it is supposed to be distributed, certainly there would be no more addicts.

Q.—But the difficulty is now with mahaldars who save by shortweight ?

A.—As long as you keep them you will never have any success with your policy.

Q.—Do you happen to know anything about the 35 non-pass-holder consumers whether they are addicts ?

A.—They are known to be addicts.

Q.—Has the doctor seen them?

DR. SMITH.—Yes, I have seen them. They came for license; I generally used to tell them that they would not get opium.

Q.—Do you examine these non-pass-holders who are said to be opium consumers and are you satisfied that they are actual consumers?

A.—They will have to be under observation.

CHAIRMAN.—You have no fear of smuggled opium from outside into your garden. I am speaking of opium which is not got from the mahaldars?

A.—I have known of one or two cases for example of a Chinaman.

Q.—But these are rare cases?

A.—Yes, otherwise there is no smuggled opium.

Q.—Whenever illicit opium is got, it is got from the mahaldar's shop?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If the supply from Government be stopped, as it will be if the 10 per cent. policy is continued, then no one would get opium any more after five years except some old men above 50 years of age?

A.—Quite.

Q.—In that case, even these shortweight sales cannot affect the policy because the policy aims at stopping the issue of opium after 5 years to all persons below the age of 50?

A.—Yes, but unless you have preventive measures you will still get smuggled opium. You must have a very strong Excise staff. I think there is very little smuggled opium now.

Q.—So you think there is no fear?

A.—Yes, there will be fear afterwards. If smugglers can get the price for opium they would bring it and consumers would take it.

ined DUMAI KANIA, Exa-
CHANDRA GOSWAMI, he

I am taking opium from my fifteenth year. I am now about 50. I have a wife who also takes opium. I require two annas weight per day and my wife also requires some quantity. I have got no land, nor have I got any house. I have
I could not give them in marriage on account

for which I have spent all money. I have no savings, and I acquired no property. I realise that opium is a very bad habit. I am willing to give up this habit if I can be treated. I have no one to look after me now. I took money from the persons to whom I gave away my daughters, and I spent that money in purchasing opium. I took about Rs. 40 in respect of one daughter and about Rs. 35 for the other. I spent the whole amount in opium-eating. I belong to the Koch community. I gave away my daughters some 7 or 8 years ago. I feel ashamed of having done that. I am now working as a gardener of the Income-tax Officer and my pay is Rs. 10. My ration of opium is 2¼ tolas. My wife has got a pass for one tola, but this quantity is not sufficient and also I do not get the full ration from the shop. Whenever I get money I spent it on opium, but when I have no money, I have to go without opium. In that case, I get dysentery. When I fall short of money I try to get money by begging or by begging opium from others with the promise that I would return it to them afterwards. Such a kind of co-operation exist among the consumers. I am convinced that it is a very bad habit. I would say, either totally prohibit or supply me with full ration. If my wife is maintained for the days I remain in hospital, I am ready to go there for treatment.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

According to our custom, we are not supposed to take any money from the bridegroom. I cannot say if any poor man even if he gives away his daughter would take any money. In my case I could not perform the required ceremony.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—

In our caste, marriage takes place by performing certain ceremonies. Because I have no money I could not afford to perform the marriage according to the rites. I had no money even to entertain people on the occasion. When I took to the habit I did not know that it was an evil. I was suffering from dysentery and I took to the opium habit in that way.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN—

I used to take 5 tolas a month in the beginning. When I first got the *patta*, I got over two and a half tolas and I only took that prescribed quantity of 2½ tolas. I did not have recourse to other sources. There is now a reduction in the ration and I am managing with it. Sometimes I get dysentery when I am unable to purchase opium; but I am now managing without taking opium from other sources. If it is further reduced, I shall not be able to manage. The mahaldar gives shortweight and I am somehow managing with that reduction.

The Committee then adjourned till the next day.

No 6

The Committee reassembled at 10-30 A.M with the Chairman presiding and all members were present.

KHAN BAHADUR MUHAMMAD CHAUDHURY, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, was examined.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q.—You have seen the questionnaire ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is your opinion as regards this ten per cent. cut policy ? Has it been a success ?

A.—It has been a success to a small extent, to the extent it has prevented youngsters from taking to the habit and persons who would otherwise have taken to opium. It has prevented some middle class men from taking opium because they are respectable and they do not like to come under the pass system and they want to avoid exposure before the public.

Q.—Do you think some of them have given up the habit ?

A.—Among these classes of men, some have given up the habit but others there are that have not given it up.

Q.—Do you know of ordinary consumers who have given up the habit ?

A —I have not come across them.

Q —Has this policy been in any way bad to the consumers ? Has it proved in any way detrimental to them or has it ruined them financially and brought great distress to them ?

A.—I would put it like this. It is ruining the health of the people. What I mean is that those who are taking opium by illicit means, and there are a lot of them, are not able to pay for their other needs because they spend the money on opium and ruin their health They pay highly and have to obtain surreptitiously. In other cases again it is a hardship because they are called upon to pay heavy prices to smugglers. Even to mahaldars they have to pay much to get opium from the surplus got by shortweight and that tells upon their finances.

Q.—Are you in favour of abolishing the policy altogether ?

A.—I very much doubt whether the policy has eradicated opium habit completely. On the whole I am not in favour of this poilicy.

Q.—For what reason ?

A.—Because it is encouraging the smugglers to adopt dishonest means; the people are taking opium without coming under the pass system and they take any quantity they like. Ultimately, therefore, the policy, is not likely to succeed and I do not consider that in the remaining five years you are likely to succeed in eradicating the evil altogether which is the aim of your policy.

Q.—You said that it has encouraged smugglers. You know that the policy has now been carried on for five years. Do you think that much smuggled opium is coming into the district ?

A.—From the figures I have, I think there has been a large number of smugglers who remain undetected. I have got the case of a Chinaman who was caught in 1930 on two occasions. On one occasion he was caught with 7 seers of opium and on the second occasion with 4 seers. He managed to escape but recently he was caught and he got 1½ years rigorous imprisonment Again there is another case of one Jalia Kalita and he was punished for smuggled opium of 1 seer in 1930. There was still another case of Bhagavati with 8½ tolas of foreign opium. In 1929 there was a case where Hasanali was caught with 1 tola of Bengali contraband treasury opium. Another Gangaram Rajput was caught with 15 tolas in 1930.

Q.—Have you any cases in 1931-32 ?

A.—None in that year; nor in the year 1932-33.

Q.—What do you attribute that to ? Is the non-detection due to the absence of smuggled opium into the district ?

A.—In the nature of things detections of smuggling can only be few and far between. It is only by chance that you can get at a man. Smuggling is done very cleverly, more cleverly than the Excise staff think of, and the staff have to depend for their information on the spies and other informants.

Q.—Can you depend on the information which the spy gives you ?

A.—There are cases where the spy is in collusion with the smugglers. Various things happen which you cannot tell.

Q.—From the figures you have given us you come to the conclusion that there is a great deal of smuggling coming into the province ?

A.—I have no doubt in my mind that smuggling is carried on. But to what exact extent I cannot tell you. It is brought by rail, by road and by steamers. I have no doubt that smuggling is there.

Q.—That is our whole trouble.

A —But that is my trouble also.

Q —We want to find out from some one who can say where the smuggled opium is coming from exactly and to what extent ?

A —When there are cases of detection, it gives an idea there is smuggling. And by the means adopted in the detection you can say with what cleverness it is being done It is done with perfection and extremely cleverly It is a pity that we are not able to find it out

Q —But then the whole thing depends upon suspicion ?

A —Not merely suspicion but also on the figures that we have got and on commonsense. But I do not say that smuggling alone is endangering the policy. There are other causes like illicit sale by the mahaldars These two combine and hinder the policy from being a success

Q —In 1932 33, 1 526 seers of opium was issued from Nowgong treasury to the consumers From the figures we have here, let us grant that 15 seers was smuggled in 1930 or say that in 1930 there were 26 seers smuggled.

A —That is my trouble I cannot guess like that. I would only ask you to take ... large part is left out not being detected ... namely that a very large propor... at a very small fraction only is detected

MR ROFFEY —But it is also possible that you might have actually detected all smuggled opium on the same process

MR DAWSON —Take Burma where it has been said that for every seer detected 99 seers goes undetected That is an extreme estimate.

WITNESS —But my difficulty is that I do not want to hazard a guess

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY —What are the facts from which you draw the conclusion that a large proportion goes undetected ?

A —I have said that it is to be concluded from the way in which this traffic goes on. I also get reports from the Excise officers and others about detection and smuggling as regards the ways employed in smuggling

Q —You mean reports in cases that have been detected ?

A.—Yes I also have before me the opinion of the Excise officers

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN.—Do you mean also reports of cases that go undetected ?

A.—I receive no reports in such cases.

The CHAIRMAN:—Have you in your possession any confidential reports which you may not disclose to us but which lead you to these conclusions?

A.—I have seen reports of cases detected.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Your impression is that smuggling is going on but it is very difficult to say to what extent?

A.—That is it; it is a fair way of putting it.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—Do you think that your Excise officers are responsible for the non-detection of cases?

A.—I would not hold them responsible. The point is it is very difficult to detect cases.

The CHAIRMAN :—There is this fact that there has been no detection in 1931-1932 and in the half of 1932-1933. How do you then think that smuggling exists?

A.—The trouble is that no chance arose and the staff could not have any clue. They are all the same trying but they could not find it out. The fact, however, does not prove that smuggling does not exist.

Q.—In such circumstances would you condemn the non-officials if they say that there is not very much smuggling going on?

A.—I would simply say that they are not aware of the figures I have given. I do not think they know all about the cases that I have mentioned to you.

Q.—Will you please convince us to your way of inference? Supposing you were in my place or in the place of Srijut Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri, or Srijut Brindaban Chandra Goswami or any one of us and I appearing before you as witness I tell you that there are no detections of smuggling from 1931 to 1933 and then tell you that smuggling exists to a large extent would you be satisfied?

A.—I dare say there are figures for 1925 to 1929. But I have not quoted them. I was responsible for asking the Excise staff for collecting figures only for the years I have quoted.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—In 1925-26 what are your figures of smuggled opium?

A.—I have not got the figures ready.

The CHAIRMAN :—I would like to draw your attention to the figures of seizure of smuggled opium published in this pamphlet entitled " Facts and Figures about Opium in Assam" at page 7. The largest quantity that was seized was in 1929-30, that is 77 seers for the whole province. We can base our argument on that figure. For the position that we take we have these figures to go by. What we want to know is on what figures do you say that there is such a large amount of opium smuggled ? Would it not be reasonable if you draw the inference that smuggled opium has been prevented by the special staff that was appointed in 1927 ?

A.—I would not say that less is seized on account of the special staff.

Q.—Then we can say that policy has not failed and it has also to some extent prevented the younger generation from taking to it as you yourself mentioned just now ?

A.—You take into consideration only smuggling. You have not taken the illicit sale by the mahaldar.

Q.—We shall come to that. It is said that because of this policy smuggled opium has been coming into the province. If you can justify that position by facts and figures it would be very helpful to the Committee ?

A.—What about poppy cultivation. This year we have detected 40,000 plants, 29,000 in one case.

Q.—Well, let us take poppy cultivation also. How many cases in each year have you found ?

A.—In 1928-29 one case, one again in 1929-30. We had 5 cases in 1930-31 and nothing in 1931-32. Again in 1932-33 we detected 3 cases.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—But in years previous to the adoption of the restriction, there were more poppy cases ?

A.—I do not know that.

Q.—Have you got figures for those years with you ?

A.—No.

Q.—You said there were three cases in 1932-33 ?

A.—Yes with about 39,000 full grown plants.

Q.—What quantity of opium could you get from the poppy plants ?

EXCISE SUPERINTENDENT :—A.—I can't say from personal experience. You can get one tola from one plant if there are sufficient number of poppy heads.

KHAN BAHADUR MUHAMMAD CHAUDHURY :—Unless you can look over the hill tops you cannot see the cultivation, it is being done so guardedly.

THE CHAIRMAN :—That is in the Mikir Hills ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any poppy cultivation case of detection in the plains ?

A.—In 1928-29 there was a case in Senchoa about three miles from here.

Q.—Of the cases you have quoted are there any in the plains ?

A.—Out of the five cases in 1930-31 three are in the Mikir Hills and two in the plains in Kampur and in Gorubat mauzas. There were 3,000 plants and the people were Koch and some Chutia people.

Q.—Did you find it very difficult to detect these cases ?

EXCISE INSPECTOR :—A.—They were grown in the compound of their houses on the banks of the Kapili river. We found alo 280 plants in another case in two houses. One was a registered consumer of opium and the other left off opium eating but took to poppy growing.

Q.—Did they try to prevent you from detecting ?

A.—No. When we searched in one house, the others knew that we would search in their house also.

Q.—They are simple people and did not think much about growing poppy ?

A.—May be.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Do you know that the poppy is taken as a vegetable ?

A.—I do not know. But in the hills I learn that it is like that.

THE CHAIRMAN :—Did you ask them what they grew that for whether for curry or for extracting opium ?

A.—The opium-eater told me that he simply grew them. He got the seeds in exchange for paddy.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—You said that the opium policy of Government was a success to a small extent ? What is your opinion with regard to its continuation ?

A.—I am not in favour of continuing it.

Q.—Is it for the reason that shortweight sales are encouraged ?

A.—Yes and also people are getting opium by illicit means

Q.—And also it increases smuggling?

A.—Yes

Q.—If shortweight and smuggling could be controlled you are of opinion that the policy could be continued?

A.—Then I would not object to continue it

THE CHAIRMAN:—Would you be in favour of it?

A.—I do not like that people should take opium

MR. E. S. ROFFEY:—The main suggestion for curing this shortweight is by issue in pill form. Have you any other suggestion?

A.—I would advocate packet system, in celluloid papers

Q.—You think that is the only method by which to cure the shortweight system?

A.—That is what occurs to me. In my opinion, without these sealed packets or pills, if you adopt other measures such as employing Government officials and so forth, there may be trouble again and it will lead to ultimate corruption everywhere

Q.—What it boils down to is this. If Government are unable to control shortweight sales you do not think that the policy should continue?

A.—That is so

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—Have you any unregistered consumers in your district?

A.—From the figures collected in 1920, I see there are about 2,400 unregistered consumers

Q.—Do you think that all these are addicts; or they have only newly taken to opium?

A.—I cannot say that. We collected census for that year

Q.—You know there are many who profess to be consumers but who really take opium for trade?

A.—Amongst them there might be some like that

Q.—What proposals have you as regards the unregistered consumers?

A.—I would open the registers

Q.—For how long?

A.—I will open after giving wide publicity.

Q.—My question was for how long you registers open?

A.—I would keep it permanently open. And I would adopt propaganda measures. I strongly think that legislation and compulsion would hardly succeed in these matters.

Q.—But you realise that it is so very difficult to educate the people ?

A.—I do not think so, provided both Government and the public combine together and heartily co-operate. It will take time but it cannot be done in a day.

Q.—Your idea is that the registers should be kept for all time for those who want to be registered ?

A.—The register should be opened for those that absolutely need opium.

Q.—How do you classify people who are addicts and others who can get rid of it ?

A —You will have to decide that on the merits and various aspects of each case. I am suggesting this as an experimental measure and you can keep it for five years and see the result at the end.

Q.—Is the Deputy Commissioner alone competent to do that ?

A.—Yes. I have tried the committee scheme but it is no good. The Deputy Commissioner may do it on the advice of the Medical Officer in the tea gardens and in the case of the other places on the advice of the Civil Surgeon.

Q.—Do you think that medical opinion is conclusive ?

A.—I cannot say it is always conclusive. But it is very useful. I may consult the mauzadar or some prominent men about the needs of individual applicants.

Mr. E. S. ROFFEY :—Why do you say that a committee is of no use ?

A.—It is my experience that such committees have no lively interest. If you have three gentlemen you invariably find that one or other could not attend for various reasons and nothing can go on. But if they agree to come in when required to confer together, I shall have no objection. I am only pointing out the impracticability of bringing round all the members whenever you want and you want them constantly. These applicants want quick disposal and they are so vigilant that in some case on the same day they get it through the Civil Surgeon and then they want orders at once. I would again suggest that the committee should not be unwieldy, I would keep the number at three.

Q —Would you dispose of the applications at headquarters or go into the interior ?

A.—I have no objection to dispose of cases there.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—You consider that the opium habit is an evil ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You want that it should go from the province ?

A. —Yes, if possible it should go out of the world.

Q —You are against this policy because there is a practice of shortweight sales, there is smuggling and there is also the poppy cultivation ?

A.—Yes. Unless these things are checked it is no use continuing the policy.

Q —Do you not consider that out of these 2,500 consumers who are unregistered and also out of the registered consumers, there are some who are not real consumers but who traffic in this business ?

A.—It is my idea that some act as middlemen.

Q.—Will you give passes for those people ?

A.—Certainly not. I will issue only for the actual consumer.

Q.—Then do you not think that even if you open the registers those opium dealers who take it for business will try to take opium and come into the registers ?

A —We have got to carefully watch that out by examining each case on its own merits.

The officers also do not claim to be infallible and it is possible that in some cases we may make mistakes.

Q.—Even then do you say that smuggling will go on ?

A.—There will be some smuggling but that would not be a big matter.

Q —You mean to say that you will be able to check it ?

A.—I think so.

Q.—Do you consider that it is not possible to check it now ?

A.—According to my suggestion, of course, you will have only one class of people from whom I have to make a selection. If I find they are not genuine consumers, I can reject the application but if they satisfy me that they

I can grant the application. As it is I am in

very difficult for me to check.

Q.—In your opinion there will be a class of people whose demand is satisfied from supply from outside the province?

A.—I do not think the demand would remain if you satisfy their craving.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Do you know the consumers?

A.—I do not know the people individually.

Q.—Even in the case of the registered consumers there might be men who are not real consumers?

A.—There may be; I do not do deny.

Q.—This smuggling and shortweight sales continue in order to satisfy the unregistered consumers?

A.—Yes. These who deal in them will satisfy themselves also.

Q.—You said the demand is only from the unregistered consumers whose figure you mentioned as 2,500?

A.—But you have lost sight of another class. Among the consuming class there are those who even now want more.

Q.—But that number could be counterbalanced by the fact that there are some who have already been given more?

A.- Such cases are very small.

Q.—Do you not agree with me that shortweight sale savings only would suffice for the quantity required for supplying these 2,500 men?

A.—I cannot really say that.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Supposing you register all the unregistered consumers. What quantity of opium would you want?

A.—Three thousand seven-hundred and fifty tolas taking an average of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tolas per head.

Q.—What is the monthly ration in this district.

A.—Six maunds 21 seers.

MR. DAWSON:—In 1931-32 there were 2,050 seers issued from the treasury and in 1932-33 1,526 seers were issued.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—How do you say that the figure of unregistered consumers is 2,500?

A.—From the 1929 census.

Q.—But what are the latest figures?

A.—I have not got later figures.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—You agree that short weight sale is universal ?

A.—I should say, mostly.

Q.—Can you give us an idea what quantity on the average they give as shortweight ?

A.—I would say two to four annas That is my idea.

Q.—The balance comes from smuggled opium ?

A.—Poppy cultivation and smuggled opium.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You say there are 2,500 unregistered consumers ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are satisfied they are getting their supply all right ?

A.—I got the figures from the mahaldars. If they are real opium-eaters they must get their full supply. Some of them might have given it up. I cannot say that all the 2,500 are really opium consumers.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Is opium smuggled into the plains into the hills or into both ?

A.—So far as the detections show it is all in the plains.

Q.—Can you give us an idea whether there is smuggling in the hills ?

A.—In my time there has been no smuggling detected in the hills.

Q.—Only there is poppy cultivation ?

A.—Yes

Q.—In the hills there is no restriction ?

A.—No.

Q.—At present even the rationed quantity is not being taken and consumed by the people in the hills.

A.—Yes by some of the hill people. There are some cases where they cannot purchase their full ration.

Q.—May I know what is the ration in the hills last year and this year ?

MR. DAWSON —

A.—Last year 1932-33, out of 1,526 seers for the whole district 675 seers were issued to the Mikir Hills in the previous year 1931-32, out of 2,050 seers issued for the 1,058 seers were for the Mikir Hills

Q.—That is the rationed quantity?

A.—That is the issue.

Q.—Is that drop due to economic depression in the hills?

KHAN BAHADUR MUHAMMAD CHAUDHURY:—There is another thing that I suspect in the hills. The mahaldars take less opium from the treasury saying there is no demand. They take a less quantity but they make up for the requisite quantity to the pass-holders by supplementing from their own stock, I mean from the stock they have accumulated by selling shortweight. This has come to my notice only very recently. If you check the passes you might be able to detect some faking in the passes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—In spite of the fact there is no restriction in the hills, these things are going on?

A.—Yes because there are a lot of unregistered consumers there.

THE CHAIRMAN:—That proves that everybody has been given a pass?

A.—Who says that everybody has got a pass? When I go out on tour in the hills there are many of them coming to me asking for passes. And then it is not all that approach me. So there are many more who have not approached me that are wanting passes.

Q.—Do you not issue passes to those who have approached you?

A.—Yes if I am satisfied that they are real consumers.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—That is the defect of the pass system?

A.—You say so about the plains but you do not say that for the hills. Let me explain. In the plains my Inspector takes the report about the applicant. The applicant is then sent to the Civil Surgeon and after he certifies the case comes to me for disposal. But in the hills I am my own authority. In the plains I am fettered by other things such as the refusal of the Civil Surgeon to give a certificate.

THE CHAIRMAN:—In the hills you issue passes to those who, you consider, are consumers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The real consumers no doubt approach you?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In that case you have refused a large number of applications of real consumers?

A.—I won't agree. I go out only once in two or three years into the hills. I stay there only for three days or so and how many can see me in that time?

Q.—Would it not be better if there is gradual restriction in the hills so that the people there would be afraid to take opium and there would be created some fear and moral effect?

A.—Fear, I do not agree. But moral effect I agree.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—Do you not think that if the same leniency is shown in the plains smuggling and shortweight sales will go on?

A.—Without any educative work, I think, there will be some people who will smuggle.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—In your opinion we will not gain very much by continuing the policy?

A.—Unless these things are checked that I mentioned before.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—From what place except the Mikir hills is opium smuggled into Nowgong?

A.—It is very difficult to say. One case I mentioned from Nowgong. But from the pamphlet issued by Mr. Dawson I find there are several sources, there is the Afghanistan opium, there is opium from Malwa, Hill Tipperah opium, opium from Cooch Behar, from the North-East Frontier, from China. It is really difficult to say from where all the opium is coming.

Q.—Is this smuggling then due to the low price of smuggled opium?

A.—It is due to the keen demand here.

Q.—Because, as you have already stated, the supply here is much less than the demand?

A.—Yes. The consumers will purchase it any way.

Q.—What means do you suggest for the prevention of this smuggling? I do not mean the treasury opium and I am speaking of contraband opium.

A.—Unless you increase the staff to a considerable extent and provide for more patrol work, nothing can be done.

Q.—You suggest increasing the preventive staff?

A.—Yes and more patrols.

Q.—Is that the only means you can suggest?

A.—If you can reduce the demand here then smuggling will go.

Q.—Do you not admit that this matter of reducing the demand is entirely in your own hands in this district?

A.—I do not think so. Both the public and the Government should combine. If that is done that would bring about good results.

Q.—Do you suggest temperance associations?

A.—I have no fancy for these high sounding names. I should like actual work in the villages.

Q.—Do you think that increase in the preventive staff will have the desired effect of checking the contraband opium?

A.—Yes. There should also be a favourable opinion regarding reduction of demand.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—The only method you suggest is to give them the opium and reduce the demand for illicit opium?

A.—Yes.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Consumption of treasury opium from illicit sources is on the increase?

A.—Yes.

Q.—To what extent is it due to the slack supervision of the Excise staff?

A.—I would say that it is more due to the inadequacy of the Excise staff than to their slackness.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—You have no fear about corruption?

A.—There might be corruption in the subordinate staff, I quite suspect. But not in the higher provincial services.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Can you say why shortweight is not detected?

A.—We are doing our best to check it. These mahaldars have their organised espionage system. They are immediately warned at sight of the car that the Deputy Commissioner is coming. They know when the Superintendent is approaching.

Q.—How many passes have you cancelled on account of detection of these shortweight sales?

A.—Last year I myself detected one case and cancelled the lease in Diphu.

Q.—Am I to understand from your evidence that the failure of this policy is due to the surplus sale by the lessees?

A.—Yes. That is in addition to the poppy cultivation and smuggling from outside.

Q.—Mainly it is due to the fact of this shortweight sale ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not a fact that this matter is entirely in your hands to prevent ?

A.—I do not think it is entirely in my hands. I have got the power but I have no means of doing that.

Q.—How many opium shops are there in Nowgong ?

A.—Forty-one

Q.—How many leases have you recalled last year on account of shortweight sales ?

A.—Six in 1931-32 and 2 in 1932-33

Q.—Can you give me any reason for these nominal detections in your district after admitting that shortweight sale is very common in Nowgong and that out of 41 shops only 2 leases were recalled on account of shortweight sale ?

A.—I have already said that it is a very difficult matter for detection. The more you detect the more clever the lessees become and take to different ways of escaping detection.

Q.—Do you think that the present margin of profit allowed to the vendor by Government is adequate ?

A.—In some cases it may be adequate and in some other cases it may not be.

Q.—Is that your reason why you could not detect more offences of shortweight sale ?

A.—No. All I can say is that if you were in my place you can see for yourself the difficulty that there is in detecting.

Q.—Things are so different in my district and our Superintendent has recalled many leases. Can you give an idea, what illicit profit the lessees make ?

A.—I think the average is three annas in the tola.

Q.—Do you think that the people of Assam consider that the present policy of Government is causing great hardship to the large number of unregistered consumers who are as many as 2,500 in your district ?

A.—I am sorry I have not heard of any sympathy expressed by anybody

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI —

Q.—Is this the first time you have heard of sympathy on behalf of the opium-eaters ?

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SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI

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A.—Yes.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATT[illegible] get your full land revenue from the [illegible]

A.—They are mostly defaulters.

Q.—Have you notified in the last year asking applications to be submitted for opium licenses?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you remember the number of applications you received last year approximately?

A.—I do not remember the figures. The clerk just now tells me that there were 700 applications and I find that I granted 540 of them.

Q.—There were only 700 applications out of 2,500 anticipated consumers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Does this figure 540 include Mikir Hills?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you go round with the Civil Surgeon to the different important centres to see the applicants and grant passes or did you decide on the applications sitting in your office?

A.—I disposed of them both while I was on tour and from my headquarters.

Q.—You disposed of them mostly in the headquarters?

A.—I should put it about half on tour and half in the headquarters.

Q.—Do you sit with the Civil Surgeon?

A.—Not on every occasion?

Q.—You decide also on your own experience?

A.—I consult him in all cases. He may not be by my side but all the same I consult him.

Q.—Do you remember whether every facility is given to the applicants to appear before the Civil Surgeon without paying any fees?

A.—I received no such complaint that any fees were asked.

Q.—I want to know whether every facility was given?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that registered opium-eaters welcome this reduction of ten per cent.?

A.—I cannot say that they welcome it. But I should say they do not.

Q.—When you go out on tour do not you see the villagers for anything and have you not asked them about this? You have no Local Board work and therefore, you have very little work?

A —Rai Bahadur is the Chairman of the Local Board and he considers that it is only his work that is heavy

Q —Are the people satisfied with this policy

A —They are not satisfied ?

Q —Do they complain to you when you go out

A —I receive complaints that they are in trouble

Q —Do you approve of the idea of engaging Government agency to sell opium instead of the lessees ?

A —I have recommended the pill system or the sealed packet system And to that I added that without this system if you only substituted Government agency it would only lead to corruption

Q —Do you think that in the interests of the unregistered consumers there is necessity now to reopen the registers and bring their names into the book specially considering the economic depression in your district ?

Would you consider that it is necessary to help these men in their economic distress and poverty ?

A —I have already said that

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI —You said that there was a shortweight case in Diphu ?

A —Yes

Q —Will you correct me if I say that it was a case of illegal possession of opium ?

A —You are making a mistake and confounding There was a Diphu case of illegal possession that was caught by the Excise Superintendent But this case of shortweight that I mentioned was caught by me in 1931 32 Baparam Saikia was the lessee

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA —Is there any order in force here to use a scale outside each opium shop by the lessees to weight opium by the consumers if they like ?

A —No I do not think I have issued any such order

Q —Do you use the medicinal scale ?

A —The scale used is

Examined by SRIJUT

Q —You are against the continuance of this policy ?

A —Yes

Q —Your reasons are that the smugglers are getting money which would have come to the Government coffers,

A —Yes

Q.—Secondly the mahaldars are enjoying illicit profit ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Thirdly it has added to the economic trouble of the opium-eater inasmuch as he has to pay a high sum for the opium he wants and that he cannot do without ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—These are the evils of the present policy ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you say that for these reasons the policy should be discontinued ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—As against these, you have told us that at any rate there have not been any new addicts amongst the people specially among the younger generations as a result of the existence of the present policy ?

A.—I do not say there are no new addicts at all.

Q.—Nobody can say that there are no new addicts at all. But the effect has been that the policy has greatly checked the habit ?

A.—Yes it has worked as a check.

Q.—After all you can see that if one person has taken to this habit, he is spoiling three successive generations, that is the effect of opium ?

A.—I admit that the effect of the drug is bad. But how many generations it effects I cannot say.

Q.—At any rate there is this good to be admitted for this policy that it has checked some of the younger generations from taking to the habit and to that extent you are practically doing good for the successive generations ?

A.—If you do not allow anybody to get it, the effect would be excellent I admit.

Q.—That effect you have obtained to the small extent it has gone ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you want to sacrifice that effect in order to remove the evils you have enumerated ?

A.—I do want to eradicate the evil but the difficulty is your method does not appeal to me.

Q.—Do you not desire that the effect that the policy has produced on the younger generation should be continued ?

A.—Certainly. But the other evil effects should be eradicated

Q.—Do you consider that the evils that you mentioned outweigh the advantages that you have got in the case of the younger generation?

A.—I should think so, on the whole. If you can save all the young generation then I can agree

Q.—Do you not consider that the evils you mention are more or less those that affect only the revenues of Government?

A.—May be that it affects Government revenue also but then it affects the people as well. Government revenue is indirectly affected. But it directly affects the people first. Should we not stop people getting illicit supply?

Q.—What other remedy can you suggest to prevent the younger generation from getting into this habit?

A.—As I have said, my remedy would be educative propaganda and creation of public opinion against the evil and so forth.

Q.—Could you give some illustrations?

A.—You may put in your text books the evil effects of opium so that the young boys may know and avoid it. You can have propaganda work by lantern lectures showing how the opium-eater suffers and ruins his health. You can have village organisation working in the village. These are some that occur to me immediately.

Q.—If these means are adopted, you say the evils could be stopped?

A.—Yes, gradually.

Q.—In how many years could you give us some idea? Is it a thousand years, five hundred years or a century, what period?

A.—I would say from 20 to 25 years.

Q.—Can you give us an instance of any other country where by such methods as you suggest they have got rid of such evils?

A.—I have not heard of opium habit being prevalent anywhere else. But in America take the case of liquor.

THE CHAIRMAN :—Q.—You won't put liquor in America the same position as opium in Assam?

A.—Liquor is not considered an evil simply by alone. But opium is considered bad in India alone.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—You mean to say that your total prohibition system may not fail in Assam?

A.—Provided you know how to tackle it. If you approach the thing in right direction you may be able to stop it.

Q.—You are in favour of compulsory prohibition in Assam?

A.—If it can be stopped it should be stopped. But how it can be stopped I cannot see.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:— Do you think this opium habit can be cured?

A.—I cannot say if the habit can be cured.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Do you mean to say that the experiment is worth trying?

A.—I say we should try some other method.

Q.—You have not suggested another method?

A.—I spoke about the educative method and lantern lectures and creation of public opinion.

Q.—Do you advocate the methods adopted by America in Assam?

A.—Seeing the result in America I cannot advise.

Q.—Because you say it has failed in America?

A.—It may fail here.

Q.—Could you give us your definite opinion and help us please?

A.—It is not an attractive proposition for me.

Q.—At the same time it is not inadvisable?

A.—I have said it is not attractive for me.

Q.—Can you tell me if you have any definite objection?

A.—I have no objection if the Government want to try.

Q.—Do you say that you won't try because it has failed in America?

A.—There are other reasons also.

Q.—Do you think that in America they have not succeeded in reducing the consumption of liquor?

A.—They may have succeeded, I cannot say. On the whole, I hear, they have not succeeded.

Q.—So you have not studied that question?

A.—No.

Q.—Supposing this policy is carried on for the next five years, opium will be practically non-existent excepting in the case of the aged persons. Do you think the people will get their supply from the smugglers?

A.—They would get their supply.

Q.—There would be no more shortweight sales; at least you would be rid of that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you believe that these people who are now taking opium will even then be taking opium from the illicit sources just as they are getting it from licit sources?

A.—They might.

Q.—And the preventive staff would not be able to do anything?

A.—They may be able to stop some.

Q.—Would the majority of these people take to smuggled opium?

A.—I cannot say that. That is a hypothetical question and I cannot visualise so far.

Q.—Nor can you definitely say that they would get the supply from the smugglers? And in the mean while there is the fact that the staff may be more organised?

A.—Commonsense says that the smugglers also would be more and more organised to meet the new situation. They would also calculate that there would be a good market afterwards.

Q.—Would anyone give up the habit in your opinion?

A.—I cannot say how many will give it up and how many will retain the habit.

Q.—You are not in a position to advise us?

A.—I only say it may not stop the opium habit and that opium-eaters will still remain?

Q.—And the district excise staff and the special staff will not be able to do anything in the matter?

A.—They will do something but you cannot expect them to do the impossible.

Q.—You have said that on account of the inadequacy of the staff they have not been able to do sufficient work?

A.—You have got some amount of slackness also. But inadequacy is largely responsible, for the paucity of detections

Q.—If the preventive staff is considerably increased you may be able to cope with the situation ?

A.—If it very largely increased there will be better results.

Q.—Do you know the amount that Government at present spends on the preventive staff ?

A.—I have no idea.

Q.—You also believe that these lessees are the agents of the smugglers ?

A.—Yes ; but I think that some of the middlemen who take it for bussiness are also the agents

Q.—Generally speaking the mahaldars are the agents of the smugglers ?

A.—Generally speaking, yes.

Q.—With the continuance of this policy the mahaldars will lose their agents ?.

A.—Yes, many of them.

Q.—And the task of the preventive staff would be much lower than now ?

A.—I cannot say that.

Q—Will you please tell us how shortweight sales affect the present policy ?

A.—In the way that the total consumption has remained the same. It is also encouraging people to take to opium.

Q.—You say it is creating new converts ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is how shortweight sales is effecting the policy ?

A.—Not merely that. Your object now is to stop opium but you are not achieving that aim. The results that you are merely unsuccessful in your object but you are quite unnecessarily losing your revenue.

Q—Let us take one thing at a time. By this distribution of opium to registered consumers by means of shortweight sales, the total quantity is not affected and you are not spreading the habit further ? You are not increasing the stock by the policy of the ten per cent. reduction ?

A.—But it is increasing from other sources.

Q.—You said that the mahaldars are creating new converts in order to sell their shortweight opium ?

A.—If people know there is a saving they come for opium.

Q.—Can you tell me of any other evil that this shortweight practice is creating ?

A.—Yes. The opium habit is still there and the policy is meant to stop it.

Q.—Supposing I am a registered opium consumer. I get my ration from the mahaldar who has saved a certain amount from shortweight sale. I go to him for purchasing that opium and after all I would get only what I would have originally got?

A.—How do you know? You might be getting more than the pass allows.

Q.—From the mahaldar?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If anyone is anxious to eradicate the evil, would it not be advisable to get rid of it by gradually accustoming the addicts to lower and lower rations and ultimately do away with it?

A.—Yes if that can be done. But you have not been able to do that.

THE CHAIRMAN.—The question of loss of Government revenue may sometimes cloud the issue. But leaving aside that question altogether don't you think that shortweight sales will not affect the policy as the amount of opium saved by the mahaldar is distributed within the province, and when the time comes that after five years treasury opium is altogether stopped then there will be no more shortweight sales?

A.—But they would get their supply from elsewhere.

Q.—Then we will have only to tackle smuggled opium and poppy cultivation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You said that by supplying the demand it will help the reduction eventually after many years by propaganda and other means?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now in the hill areas you are trying to supply that demand. There is practically no restriction there?

A.—We have the pass system there. They are not absolutely free.

Q.—Any way they are freer there. Is it more successful in preventing the consumption of opium by the younger people or by other people than it is successful here in the plains?

A.—Here the people are different from the people in the hills. You will find the hill people take very long to give up the habit.

Q.—Do you consider that your method of supplying the demand will be more successful than the strict measures contemplated under the present policy in the plains?

A.—In both they are equally unsuccessful.

Q.—Supposing we take your suggestion and supply the demand. Will it not be as unsuccessful as in the hills?

A.—In the plains we shall resort to other means also such as propaganda work at the same as we are continuing the cut policy.

Q.—So you will continue the cut policy?

A.—I do not know; if necessary I suppose you should. But I cannot say which system is better.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—If you go on opening the registers from time to time is there not a danger of new addicts coming in?

A.—If you successfully do the propaganda work it would gradually reduce the number.

Q.—Why do you want the register at all?

A.—To allow the opium-eaters who get their supply by illicit means to get by licit means.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—When you say propaganda work you are not very much in favour of officials doing that?

A.—I would leave it to the general public. Of course Government will co-operate.

Q.—If that opium policy is given up and the propaganda is carried by non-officials would it not create a bad moral effect on the younger generation who will be led to believe that Government after all are not against this opium habit for they are after the revenue? And would not that impression encourage them to take to the habit again?

A.—I do not think like that.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—If the people do not carry on this propaganda you on the side of the Government will not think about it. That is to say if people remain indifferent the Government should also remain indifferent? Is that the position?

A.—But I do not see why Government should interfere in matters in which popele are themselves indifferent.

No 7.

Next the Committee examined RAI SAHIB GOLAK CHANDRA GOSWAMI

His replies to the questionnaire are printed at page 57 of the p inted replies.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q —You say that this 10 per cent cut policy has been a success?

A —Yes.

Q.—You say that to a large extent smuggling into Assam is reduced. Are you speaking of smuggling in the whole of Assam or are you speaking of Nowgong alone?

A.—I talk about the whole of Assam.

Q.—On what information do you base your statement and what is the source of your opinion?

A.—The source of my information is from the newspapers and from the general talk with many of my friends and talk with the Excise officers.

Q.—From your talk with the Excise officers you gather that there is not much smuggling into Assam?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did not the Excise officers give you any idea that there is a great deal of smuggled opium in Assam?

A —No.

Q —There is one other statement you have made in answer to question No 5. You say:—" Before my eyes and eyes of the Excise and other officers there are some unregistered consumers who are enjoying unauthorised opium"? You still stick to that statement?

A.—Yes.

Q —You say they know that these unregistered consumers are consuming opium that is unauthorised?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Still they do not prosecute them?

A —No

Q.—Do you have any particular instance in mind of such cases of persons who consume opium without any passes but who are seen by the Excise officers?

A.—I can cite instances.

Examined by MR. DAWSON—

Q —You have been a mauzadar for a good many years?

A —Yes.

Q —Your father too, was a mauzadar before you?

A—Yes.

Q —You are also an honorary magistrate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—*Look at your answer to question No 6 please*: "I cannot say the number of unregistered opium-eaters of the district. The number of such men at present in the radius of 4 miles from Kampur opium shop is about 60". *Do you make that statement as an actual fact from your own knowledge?*

A.—I consulted with the Kampur opium lessee and I also thought over the matter.

Q.—I do not wish to cross examine you. But are you satisfied that that statement is fairly correct?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There is *one more thing I will ask. On the whole*, Rai Sahib, you are in favour of the present policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you do not think that there will be much danger by contin ing it for 5 years more?

A.—That is my view.

Q.—But you want some steps being taken for checking shortweight sales and things like that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now just look at the end of your replies: "It is to be considered if the retail sale can be managed by the servants paid by the Government"?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you suggest that they should have a fixed pay?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that would be an improvement, do you honestly believe that?

A.—I say it from this point of view that they would be Government servants and they would be afraid of prosecutions and of losing their job if they misbehave.

Q.—That is your point of view?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN —

Q.—Do you think that these posts should be made pensionable?

A.—Yes, if Government desires it.

Q.—What would you give them?

A.—In these hard days I think Rs. 30 would be sufficient.

Q.—They should be just like other Government servants and be subject to the rules?

A.—Yes.

Q.—About the 60 unregistered opium-eaters round about Kampur would you like to give them passes?

A.—If the Excise Department is not in a position to check it and these people have to pay higher prices for opium, thereby ruining their family, I think it is better to register them. I say only if you cannot keep them under control, I think this is the only remedy. But if the department can check shortweight sale and smuggling etc., there is no need of giving more passes.

Q.—If they cannot check them the registers should be opened again?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how many years?

A.—At least for the next five years.

Q.—In that case would it not so happen that many people who are not actual consumers would come and try to get opium passes as a business proposition or for some such other purpose?

A.—Government should take steps to stop such cases.

Q.—How?

A.—No one should be given a pass for opium unless he requires it necessarily for his health or on account of his old age.

Q.—Who is to certify that?

A.—The doctor, it should be certified by two local-gentlemen.

Q.—Will you be able to tell in your locality among those people who apply for passes who are really in need of it and who are not requiring it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What about this reduction policy? Do you think that this reduction policy of reducing the rations year by year is keeping the consumers satisfied with their reduced rations?

A.—They are not satisfied.

Q.—You think the reduction is a false one and although the Government is reducing the ration the consumers are trying to supplement it by some other means?

A.—Yes, in some cases of course they try to supplement it.

Q.—Do you think that in that case reduction would be stopped permanently?

A.—It is very difficult to satisfy the opium-eaters. more they get the more they would want. But want to help the people they should not be infl considerations.

Q.—Would you fix any age-limit over which there should be a permanent ration? At present it is 50.

A.—I suggested the age of 45 and I say that those below 45 should not be given passes.

Q.—Do you suggest that in the case of persons over 45, their rations should not be affected?

A.—I think now that 50 years is good.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY—

Q.—How many registered consumers are there in your mauza?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—Can you tell me roughly?

A.—It may be about 100.

Q.—Do the consumers pay up their rent punctually or are they in arrears in their revenue payments?

A.—Most of them are in arrears. They are bad defaulters.

Q.—What about the rest?

A.—Those who are not opium consumers they are in every way better, in their mode of living, in their maintaining their family and in every respect.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You want to re-open the register?

A.—I have provided this only in case the department is not able to check the short sales, etc. I know that if you re-open the registers there would be lots of new men seeking registration. Still seeing the present sad condition and distress of the unregistered men, it is for their benefit that I mainly want it to be re-opened. From that point of view I consider that it is rather a good thing to open it.

Q.—Registers should be opened to all or only to men of certain age?

A.—I would like to cite one instance in this connection. Just near the circle office on the banks of the Kapili river, there are 4 boys between the ages of 15 to 21 who are opium consumers. Only the eldest has got a pass and the remaining three have no passes. For a long time from their boyhood I have seen they are enjoying opium and now nobody can check them. I know it; the Excise officers know it and all know it. It was started when they were young by their mother at a time when there was no restriction.

Q.—Suppose you have the power would you let these young men have opium?

A.—They have been so long accustomed to opium that even if you attempt stopping they would somehow get it.

Q.—Generally up to what age would you allow passes?

A.—To persons up to the age of 45 they should not be allowed. Above 45 if they are real addicts passes should be given provided the shortweights, etc., are not checked.

MR. DAWSON.—I think you said 40 in your statement in answer to question 12?

A.—I want to make it 45 now.

Q.—Why are these boy consumers not prosecuted, did you send a report to the officers?

A.—I submitted reports now and then. I produced them before some officers even.

Q.—Do you know why they were not detected?

A.—I do not know. The department knows.

Q.—Do you consider that this great evil should be stopped at once if possible?

A.—Yes.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—According to you, the Government policy is a success?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are also in favour of continuing the present policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know that this cut will be continued for 5 years more?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And after that there will be no excise opium in Assam except for those above 50?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Am I to understand from your statement that it would be wise for the Government to open the registers for the unregistered opium-eaters now?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Your reason for that is that the department has not been able to check shortweight sales, etc. And the main reason is they are paying heavy rates for the opium they want and it is desirable that registers should be opened for the benefit of those persons?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say what they are paying for their opium?

Q.—Would you fix any age-limit over which there should be a permanent ration? At present it is 50.

A.—I suggested the age of 45 and I say that those below 45 should not be given passes.

Q.—Do you suggest that in the case of persons over 45, their rations should not be affected?

A.—I think now that 50 years is good.

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A.—It may be about 100.

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Q.—What about the rest?

A.—Those who are not opium consumers they are in every way better, in their mode of living, in their maintaining their family and in every respect.

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Q.—Suppose you have the power would you let these young men have opium?

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A.—To persons up to the age of 45 they should not be allowed. Above 45 if they are real addicts passes should be given provided the shortweights, etc., are not checked.

MR. DAWSON.—I think you said 40 in your statement in answer to question 12?

A.—I want to make it 45 now.

Q.—Why are these boy consumers not prosecuted, did you send a report to the officers?

A.—I submitted reports now and then. I produced them before some officers even.

Q.—Do you know why they were not detected?

A.—I do not know. The department knows.

Q.—Do you consider that this great evil should be stopped at once if possible?

A.—Yes.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—According to you, the Government policy is a success?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are also in favour of continuing the present policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know that this cut will be continued for 5 years more?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And after that there will be no excise opium in Assam except for those above 50?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Am I to understand from your statement that it would be wise for the Government to open the registers for the unregistered opium-eaters now?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Your reason for that is that the department has not been able to check shortweight sales, etc. And the main reason is they are paying heavy rates for the opium they want and it is desirable that registers should be opened for the benefit of those persons?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say what they are paying for their opium?

A.—I have heard that they pay up to Rs. 4.

Q.—By bringing them to the register they have to pay only Rs. 2.

A.—Yes, but even then they do not get accurate weight.

Q.—You want to keep the register open for a long time or for a few months only after issuing a notification to the public to file their petitions before the Deputy Commissioner and when the names are thus registered the registers would be closed once for all?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you suggest any means to stop this shortweight sale?

A.—Government may appoint more persons specially for the detection of shortweight sales. And then there should be given a reward for detection.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY—

Q.—What limit would you pay for rewards?

A.—I cannot say. It is the general belief that the Excise officers get some reward or bribe, whatever you may like to call it, from the mahaldars if they do not detect the crime, the reward for detection should be such that they will not care for the bribe from the mahaldar.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN—

Q.—You have said at page 59 that "the Sub-Deputy Collectors, the mauzadars and the officers in charge of the thanas may be empowered to inspect opium shops". Would you add anybody else to that list, say the Gaonburas, the mandals, the school pandits?

A.—No.

Q.—Would you include the Extra Assistant Commissioners?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The members of the Local Board?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The Surveyors?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The Deputy Inspectors and the Sub-Inspectors of Schools?

A.—Yes.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—" Opium shops should be settled with reliable and substantial local men of good reputation." Would you like to confine to local men?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I think you have suggested the engaging of Government agency ?

A.—Yes, for selling opium instead of lessees as at present.

Q.—Do you think there would be improvement by that ?

A.—Yes, I have already answered that ?

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—You have said that opening of registers is a bad thing ? Why ?

A.—Because it will tempt every man to take to the habit.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—After the introduction of this policy, has the opium habit been checked amongst the younger generation ?

A.—Yes, the opium consumption by the younger generation has been largely checked.

This policy has been endangered by short sales on the part of the mahaldars and also by the fact in the Mikir Hills many consumers have got more ration than what they require and they sell the excess in the plains. This excess is sold at a very high rate in the plains. I think opium should be retained only for medicinal purposes and for the use of old men. It should not be given to any other person and the adoption of such a step would be for the benefit of the people. Nowadays many consumers have been compelled to give up the habit on account of economic depression in the plains as well as in the hills. If we take advantage of the present depression and stop opium altogether except for the old persons, I think it will be very good. We need not wait for these five years to do that.

No. 8.

MAULAVI MUHAMMAD MAJIFF, Nowgong, was next examined. He deposed as follows :—

I have not submitted any statement. I am a trader and I am an *ex*-mahaldar. I am a Municipal Commissioner for a long time and I am also a member of the Local Board. I have elephant mahal, cane mahal and fishery mahal. Fifteen years ago I had an opium shop at Chaparmukh.

I consider that the present policy is a success. It will be a very good thing if the supply of opium be stopped even [illegible] once except for medical purposes and for old [illegible] of age.

I am quite in agreement with what Rai Sahib Golak Chandra Goswami said in his evidence just now. If the checks that he has advocated are not possible then I should say that the ten per cent. cut should be continued.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

I advocate stopping at once if possible. Otherwise the present cut policy should be continued. I know there are some unregistered opium-eaters taking opium without passes from the mahals. I do not know at what price they get it. I think they get it from the savings from short-weight sales. I think if a greater margin of profit is allowed then the vendor will not resort to short-weight sales. I am against issuing of fresh passes to unregistered consumers.

I have not heard much of contraband opium coming from outside except the case of a Chinaman.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

My idea is that there is no smuggling from outside. In my opinion smuggling may take place on account of the higher prices here because people bring it here and make more profit.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

I believe the unregistered consumers are very few. I am definitely opposed to reopening the registers. Regard being had to the fact that opium-eaters have not been able to purchase the rations allowed to them and that no untoward consequences have resulted, I am of opinion that opium can be immediately stopped.

No. 9.

The Committee then examined—

SRIJUT SATYAHASH GOSWAMI, Pleader.

SRIJUT SURESH CHANDRA MUKHERJEE, Pleader.

SRIJUT CHANDRA KANTA BORKATAKI.

SRIJUT SATYAHASH GOSWAMI replied.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You have read the questionnaire ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the present opium policy is a success?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what way?

A.—It is a success in this way. It has very much reduced the [illegible] the Government treasury. To our info[illegible] [illegible]uggling of contraband opium into the district from outside the province. But there are some illicit sources, that is the opium saved by short-weight sales given by the vendors That too does not affect the policy because the original quantity remains the same and the actual reduction is not affected.

Q.—But if the policy is continued then smuggled opium may come in?

A.—I do not think so. We are of opinion that so long as there is licit business of opium there will be a little illicit opium too As for instance, there is no business of cocaine here and there is no smuggling here. The same is the case of *charas* also.

Q.—On the other side the argument will be that the people of Assam do not consume *charas* or cocaine?

A.—May be. But then opium was also not consumed long before. It came with the sepoys during the Ahom Raj. In the same way if cocaine and *charas* might be introduced and evil habits grow up.

Q.—You are in favour of continuing this policy?

A.—We are in favour of stopping altogether except for medicinal purposes and for the use of old men above the age of 60.

Q.—You do not then approve of the 50 years' limit?

A.—It should be a bit higher. It should be stopped at once in the case of the rest.

Q.—Will it not be hard on the old men between 50 and 60?

A.—No. I have experience of old opium-eaters of ages above 50. I have cured many. I am a congress worker and in my social work in this direction I have never connected it with politics, but I worked it as a purely social movement. The leaving of the habit has not proved fatal although in the first week or so the consumers feel difficulties.

Q.—About how many cases have you had experience of?

A.—I can cite one very bad case where the consumer was taking 15 tolas in the month or half a tola per day. [illegible] was before the system was introduced—before 1921 [illegible] like that. On account of having to purchase [illegible]

buffalo, his bullock and all and became a street beggar. He continued in the bad habit for over 10 years. We went there and found that he was consuming 15 seers a month and we know that he took something more whenever he could get it. But when we went there he joined us and said that he would leave the habit because he was satisfied this was a bad habit. He was with me for about 15 days and during this time he completely gave up the habit. He took no medicine and he of course suffered for the first 3 or 4 days and we gave him only sour curds because he complained of a sort of griping pain in the stomach.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Did he resume the habit again ?

A.—No.

THE CHAIRMAN :—Is he living now ?

A.—Yes, he is at a distance of more than 40 miles from here.

Q.—What is he doing now ?

A.—Cultivating lands.

Q.—How does he look ?

A.—The last time I saw him was in 1921. He was fat and he was looking very healthy—much healthier than I ever knew him before.

Q.—How many cases like that have you cured ?

A.—Lots of cases. This one I have cited because it is typical and the man was taking so much as half a tola per day. We cured many people taking two tolas, one tola a month and so on.

Q.—Have you come in contact with opium-eaters above the age of 50 who have been cured of the habit altogether since the introduction of this policy ?

A.—Yes. Also due to the non-co-operation movement in 1920-21 many over the age of 50 have given up the habit.

Q.—Do you remember the names of these men ? Could you give one case ?

A.—I can give names of many. There is one name that I can say, that of Kamal Ghosh. There are many others I could give. In these cases they have not again taken to it and they have all been convinced that it is harmfull to the health and that it is a bad practice. When they first took to it, they probably thought that it was good for them.

Examined by MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—Do you think that *ganja*-eating is a bad habit ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What about drinking of liquor ?

A.—That is bad also.

Q.—Which do you consider is the worst of the three evils, *ganja*, liquor or opium ?

A.—The worst is opium.

Q.—I have often heard that *ganja* is the worst ?

A.—I do not agree with that.

Q.—Because they say it makes a man mad ?

A.—That is the condition for a short time.

Q.—Take a man of 40 or 45 years. He takes one tola of opium a month. He is content with that and he does not want any more. Do you think it does him much harm ?

A.—It does him harm because instead of taking opium, if he takes any other good thing, such as milk or butter, it would be better for his health.

Q.—In the same way, if a man takes two pegs of whisky in the evening, your advice is that he could give it up and take milk instead ?

A.—But these people cannot afford to take both opium and milk or butter at the same time. The reason is, that their purse is not big.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—You mean to say that it will not harm a well-to-do person ?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—Are there any who have not resumed the habit ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What percentage ?

A.—May be 5 per cent.

Q.—And the others ?

A.—They have totally given up the habit.

Q.—Is it not due to economic depression ?

A.—At the present time, the economic depression is also affecting the people who are taking opium on passes.

Q.—Do you know that there are many people who take opium without passes ?

A.—But they are not regular addicts. But still they do take opium on some festivals and on such important occasions. It is a necessity to them.

Q.—Don't you think that there are a number of people who are taking opium without passes ?

A.—To my information, other kinds of opium-eaters. They are not unregistered regular addicts.

Q.—Did you ever care to enquire if there was smuggling into the province ?

A.—Had there been smuggling, it would have been detected as Government is maintaining a staff for that purpose.

Q.—Then your conclusion is that, as there is no detection, there is no smuggling. Is that so ?

A.—We could have heard it from the people had there been any smuggling.

Q.—Is it the practice of the people to give information of smuggling ?

A.—When we go and remain in touch with the people, somehow or other we can have the information.

Q.—Do you tour throughout the district at all times and at all seasons ?

A.—I travel very often.

Q.—Have you any idea of the Mikir Hills ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is there any poppy cultivation in the Mikir Hills ?

A.—Very little.

Q.—But still there is ?

A.—There may be ; but these are very rare cases in remote places.

Q.—You know that rations have been reduced. Do you think that the opium consumer is satisfied with this reduction ?

A.—It is very very difficult to satisfy the consumer, but there is no general grievance on account of the cut.

Q.—Are they craving for more ?

A.—If there is no general grievance for more opium, we cannot say that they are dissatisfied

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Is it because they are getting from illicit sources ?

A.—No. On the other hand, even the rations granted at present, they are not in a position to purchase fully.

Q.—You started your propaganda in 1920-21. For how many years did you continue it ?

A.—Until now.

Q.—Take the years between 1921 and 1925. How many cures did you make approximately ?

A.—About half the number of opium eaters in the village.

Q.—Then from 1925 to date how many further cures have made ?

A.—When the pass system was introduced, many of them did not come for passes at that time, but gave up the habit for fear of shame and for other reasons.

Q.—That is since 1928 ?

A.—Since the date of registration. They gave up for shame and other troubles involved, such as going out for passes, etc.

Q.—By how much do you think you have reduced the consumption since 1925 ?

A.—To a considerable degree, because we find in the shops that now where opium was used to be sold, say, 10 seers monthly the sale has been reduced to three seers.

Q.—If you are reducing by propaganda, why should you have the Government cut ?

A.—An opium consumer who is not likely to come down by persuasion has his rations cut by the Government policy. They start by taking it as medicine and with many it becomes a habit. When the social workers go there and persuade them, they do not get any help from the Government officials. For that reason, the cut policy is useful. Unless Government and people combine, it would be difficult to eradicate the evil.

Q.—Do these people pay land revenue?

A.—They are often defaulters. They are not only defaulters in the payment of land revenue but they are also defaulters to their own *garus* (spiritual guides).

Q.—According to you, during the last two or three years land revenue should have gone up, because you say that many opium-eaters have given up the habit?

A.—But these are exceptional times for the past two or three years, and we are in the midst of an economic depression.

Q—Do you know Srijut Nilmoni Phukan and do you know also that he carries on some propaganda? He said at Jorhat that he had to take a doctor with him because of the sufferings of the people that he cured?

A—We did not keep all the addicts with us. and we have experience of many of them giving it up without treatment.

CHAIRMAN:—You tried to create an idea in their minds that the habit was bad?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Are you speaking individually, or are you representing any association?

A.—I am the Secretary of the Servant of the Untouchable Society, Nowgong; I am the President of the Nari Raksha Sabha of Nowgong; and I am also speaking as a temperance worker.

BABU SURESH CHANDRA MUKHERJEE:—I may say that I agree in all that Srijut Satyahash Goswami has now said before the Committee. So far as I am concerned, I do not represent any association.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Is there a large number of opium consumers amongst untouchables?

SRIJUT SATYAHASH GOSWAMI:—Yes. Among lower classes there are many more consumers than in the higher classes.

SRIJUT CHANDRA KANTA BORKATAKI:—I am a member of the Local Board. I am the Vice-Chairman of the Dhing Village Authority, and I am President of the Raiyot Sabha. I fully agree with what has been said by Srijut Satyahash Goswami. I can also say that these are the views of the Raiyot Sabha. The *Sabha* was founded six years ago, and it sits as occasion necessitates.

Examine[illegible] MBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You [illegible] tra.

SRIJUT S[illegible] .—Yes.

Q —Do you preach that opium is a bad habit ?

A.—It is not only on opium that we preach, but also that all intoxicating drugs are bad.

Q —Do you advise that it should be given up ?

A —Yes

Q.—Have you succeeded in your attempt ?

A.—Yes, in all sorts of attempts.

Q —To what extent ?

A.—Among our disciples, there are very few who do not carry out our views Those who do not regard our views do not approach us but remain aloof

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY —How many disciples have you in your *Satra* ?

A.—More than about 10,000 in Assam.

Q —How many in Nowgong district alone ?

A.—May be about 3 000.

Q.—According to you, there is no smuggling in Nowgong ?

A —None, except the Chunaman case.

Q [illegible] rs are taking opium from [illegible] ?

A.—Yes

Q.—What means do you suggest for tackling the problem of short-weight sales ?

A —If this system of mahaldars remains, it is very difficult to check this unless opium is sold in some other way.

Q —Except packets and tabloids can you suggest any other means ?

A —No other means will be successful I think. If you do not have the packet or tabloid system, there will be always short-weight sales

Q.—What means do you suggest ?

A.—I want to suggest first of all that opium should be sold in packets.

Q —Leave aside these suggestions. Have you any other ?

A —I have already said that no other means will be effective if such arrangement cannot be made.

BABU SURESH CHANDRA MUKHERJEE :—On this point, I do not agree with my friend. I prefer selling opium by Government officers, I mean, paid servants, because they will be more responsible than the lessees.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—What pay do you suggest ?

A.—About 100 rupees per month.

Q.—Should it be pensionable ?

A.—That is not our concern. They will be responsible Government servants.

Q.—Probably you would prefer graduates ?

A.—That will partly remove the unemployment question also.

Mr. E. S. ROFFEY :—Do you think that if the margin of legal profit is Rs. 20 and the man is dishonest is he likely to be honest for Rs. 30 ?

A.—May be not for Rs. 30, but he may be honest for Rs. 100.

CHAIRMAN :—What do you think of the suggestion that Government servants may be paid a low salary of Rs. 30 and the posts may be made pensionable ?

SRIJUT SATYAHASH GOSWAMI :—That would not improve matters.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Supposing the salary is made pensionable and is fixed at Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 with prospects and these graduates are taken in on promotion on approved service ?

A.—If that inducement is given it would be good. That is probably another alternative for meeting the present situation.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—You said that now opium-eaters are convinced that it is a bad habit. Is it as the result of your propaganda work ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then what about the reduction policy ?

A.—This reduction policy has some effect on the consumers because they have got to know that they cannot take opium as much as they want and that their ration would be annually reduced. Therefore, it has really an effect on the consumers who would not yield to persuasion.

Q.—Suppose we discontinue this policy and we back the propaganda work. I mean both officials and the public co-operate. Would it be preferable ?

A.—No. Both the policy and the propaganda must go side by side.

Q.—Suppose only one is to remain. Which would you prefer?

A.—Either alone will not succeed. When reducing a ration propaganda alone cannot help. There is a good number of obstinate opium-eaters. They would not listen to reason.

Q.—If there is reduction with propaganda do you consider that it would be a success?

A.—Yes, after five years.

CHAIRMAN:—You want both legislation and persuasion together?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Would you like that Government should immediately stop this habit?

A.—Yes, by legislation.

Q.—You want to take advantage of the present economic situation?

A.—Yes

Q.—If the Government do not do it, the other alternative is to carry on the policy?

A.—There is one thing that I find. My idea was that this ten per cent. reduction was to be on the original quantity without reference to the reduced quantities each year. But I am now informed that the ten per cent. reduction is calculated on the remainder left each year. In that case opium will not be ended after these five years.

CHAIRMAN :—I think the object of the policy was to have 10 per cent. cut on the original ration so that in course of 10 years the whole opium will go out.

A.—But I am informed that the 10 per cent. cut is made on the residue left each year.

CHAIRMAN :—I think there is some mistake. So far as I remember it was the intention of Government to have the 10 per cent. cut on the original quantity, so that after 10 years no opium would be supplied from the treasury.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Your idea is that the register should not be opened?

A.—The register should not be opened.

Q.—Even if this reduction policy continues?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the general attitude of Government towards your movement ?

A.—We are opposed sometimes.

MR. ROFFEY :—When were you opposed ?

A.—We were opposed in some cases. We do not know what instructions were issued by Government. But some Government officials in the villages do tell the people that they are not to hear us. That was the opposition we got.

CHAIRMAN :—When was that ?

A.—Any time when they come across us.

Q.—Is it going on even now ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—If reformers go to any opium-eater in the village in a batch of 6 or 7 persons would that be any offence ?

A.—In 1930-31 there had been many arrests made.

MR. DAWSON :—Were you arrested in 1930-31 ?

A.—No, there were some instances where the workers were arrested, but not all of them.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Do you know of any such instance where the opium-eaters did not visit the shops, but the mahaldars came to distribute opium in their house ?

A —At the time of the movement in 1930-31 I have heard of many such instances of mahaldars coming to the opium-eaters' houses and giving the rations.

Q.—If such instances are brought to the notice of the Government officers, they do not take action ?

A.—No.

MR ROFFEY :—Was this going of the mahaldars to the consumers' houses due to the fact that the workers prevented the householders from going to the shops ?

A.—No.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Do you know of any circular issued in 1931 against the non-co-operation movement in which it was definitely stated that opium was good on account of the climate of Assam ?

A.—I do not know of any circulars. But I know of some officers especially in Nowgong who deputed inspectors to lecture to the people, even to the school boys, saying that opium was good. I myself heard men say so.

Q.—There was a good deal of opium smoking before ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has this disappeared now ?

A.—Yes, totally disappeared.

Q.—Is this as a result of legislation *plus* persuasion ?

A.—Yes. Another thing is that in smoking they require more opium

CHAIRMAN :—You are a Goswami ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are the head of a certain *Satra* ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are the President of the Nari Raksha Sabha ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know of any instances where girls have been sold for getting money to purchase opium ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Besides the instance that came before us yesterday, have you any other instances ?

A.—Yes, there was another man Paniram who came here yesterday but was not examined. He gave away his daughter to a Bengali, simply because he was promised money. But after taking the girl the man did not give him any money and a case was brought against him. It was referred to me In the end, I was able to make a compromise between the father-in-law and the son-in-law.

Q.—Have you any other instances ?

A.—There are many.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Is it not the custom to take money at the time of giving the daughter in marriage ?

A.—No.

Q.—Is it not so among the Lalungs ?

A.—They never gave away their daughter. Among the Lalungs and Koches they bring the sons to their houses.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—You are carrying on your propaganda even now ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When did you go on tour last ?

A.—During last month I did not go out for some family troubles. But in the month of May I went · Fu gudam and another time to Jagi Road.

Q.—What do people say as to why this Committee was appointed by Government?

A.—Opium-eaters think that if they come and make their grievances known to the Committee, they will be allowed to get more opium or will be allowed to cultivate poppy. The general literate public is of the opinion that Government wants to abolish opium habit from the people of Assam.

CHAIRMAN:—In one of the statements of a certain witness it was alleged that the Goswamis take opium. Is this a fact?

A.—No, there are exceptional cases probably. I know of only one Goswami in Nowgong being an Adhikar who takes opium.

No. 10.

The Committee then examined—

1. MOHAN SINGH, Mauzadar, *Duar Amla.*
2. TEKANG CHANDRA, Mauzadar, Duar Bamuni.
3. MANSINGH, Mauzadar, Lumding, and 7 others.

All of them were Mikirs and No. 2 was a veteran opium-eater of Duar Bamuni mauza. There was among them one Gaonbura who was not an opium-eater but he would press for having some opium being given to him. This Gaonbura explained to the Committee how opium is extracted from poppy plants. He said that the shops were situated a long way off and, therefore, the consumers preferred cultivating poppy to taking opium from the shops. It was inconvenient for them to go the long way to a shop and if they cultivated poppy they could have it at any time they wanted. Usually they got about three *ratis* of opium from one capsule.

Tekang Chandra was a veteran opium-eater who possessed a pass. They sometimes exchanged cotton or lac for opium in the shop. They also took cotton or lac to the Marwari who gave them money and then they went to the opium shop and got opium.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Mohan Singh said that there was a scarcity of money now-a-days and for want of money they were obliged to reduce their rations. Those having passes for three tolas took only 2½ tolas and so forth. The maximum quantity they got in the pass was for 3 tolas.

Tekang Chandra said that he would not take more opium even if he could afford it when the economic depression had gone. The reason was that he realised he was depriving himself of the necessities of life by having to spend for opium.

Having necessarily had to cut down the ration on account of the depression, he would stick to it and not increase the quantity when better days came. He would not allow his sons to take to the habit or any other members of his family. They had not tasted it so far and he was not going to allow his wife or children to take to the evil. If Government stop issue of opium, then he had no other alternative but to submit to it and if God be pleased he would live, otherwise he would die. If a cure was possible, he had no objection to go to the hospital for treatment. He started taking opium some 30 or 32 years ago when he first got some ailment in the stomach He was cured of his disease but then somehow he acquired the opium habit which he could not give up so long. He was willing to be treated so as to get rid of the evil.

Mansingh Mikir who was the mauzadar of Lumding said that he was an opium-eater with a ration of 2½ tolas. He was taking it for about ten years now. He knew it was an evil habit but he could not give it up. He considered that it would be a good thing to have the rations gradually cut. But in his case he was an old man over 50 years and he could not give it up. If opium was made scarce then of course he would be compelled to give it up. If the old people are exempted, then it would be possible for others to give the habit up.

Another Mikir, mauzadar of Duar Amla, did not take opium. He pleaded for opium at cheaper price from Government.

Mansingh Mikir said that opium tasted bitter; but it was invigorating and he felt he could not do without it.

The Committee then adjourned to meet again at Tezpur on Friday the 7th July 1933 at 11 A. M.

No. 11.

The Committee reassembled at the Circuit House at Tezpur at 11 A.M. on Friday the 7th July, 1933, with Rev. J. J. M. Nichols-Roy as Chairman; all the members were present.

The first witness to be examined was MR. M. MITRA, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Darrang. He submitted a statement, in reply to the questionnaire, which the Chairman read out to the members.

CHAIRMAN :—In your reply to question No. 11, you say, "the sentimental part of our nature is not unfortunately protected by a non-conducting envelope of reason". Would you please explain that ?

A.—That is, your sentiment effects your reason

CHAIRMAN :—Now, I would like to ask you a few questions. First of all, do I understand from these replies that the policy has, to some extent, had a good effect on the consumers of the younger generation ?

A.—That is probably true ; I should agree with this statement.

Q.—Do you think that a large number of young people, who are taking opium, are now forced to give it up on account of this policy, or is it due to trade depression ?

A.—It is due to a stronger public opinion, I think, that people do not take opium so much now-a-days.

Q.—Is it also due to the fact that the policy has made people believe that Government is also against the opium habit ?

A.—Yes, undoubtedly.

Q.—So people are convinced that both officials and non-officials think that opium habit is very bad ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say, in reply to the first question :

> "There had been on the average about 40 cases of conviction a year for illegal possession of opium"

Does that include treasury opium ?

A.—Yes. The figures that the office gave me, are headed—"Number of convictions for smuggling opium". That is the figure given to me, and according to that, I have calculated the average to be 40.

Q.—What does the word "smuggling" then mean ? Does it mean treasury opium or contraband ?

A.—Both.

Q.—Can you give us an idea about how many cases of this 40 includes foreign opium ?

A.—Roughly about a quarter.

MR. DAWSON :—In 1928-29, for the Darrang district there were 23 cases of illicit possession of excise opium, and 6 of contraband opium. For 1929-30, illicit possession of excise opium is blank, but there are 8 cases of illicit possession of contraband opium. In the next year, 1930-31 illicit possession of excise opium is blank and contraband opium is also blank. That cannot be true.

MR. MITRA :—Illicit possession of excise opium for 1930-31 is 46, and contraband is blank. In 1931-32, 0 cases of illicit possession of excise opium and 9 cases of illicit possession of contraband opium. In 1932-33, illicit possession of excise opium, 36 and of contraband opium, 13.

Q.—You took an average of 40 cases. Is that correct or not ?

A.—It is nearly correct, but it is not quite precise.

Q.—Then, you would modify this statement of yours that there has been an average of about 40 cases of conviction for illegal possession of opium, both excise and contraband ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—We would like to get an idea of the amount of contraband opium in each of the six years that was seized from smugglers.

A.—It is roughly about 7 seers for each year. In 1930-31 it is 6 seers and in 1931-32 it is 52 tolas which were brought from Cooch Behar. There is another case of 69 tolas which I think is contraband ; it cannot be excise. There is also yet another case of 13 tolas. I should say that I depended for the replies that I have given, on the statement that was furnished to me by the Excise office. The Excise Superintendent is new ; the clerk that helped me with the figures is new ; and I am new also. There is some confusion in the figures submitted to me.

CHAIRMAN :—We shall, then, depend on the printed reports that we have got ?

Q.—You have said also that "neither the special staff nor the district staff can get hold of important smugglers whose agents are carefully chosen and handsomely paid." Do you have any definite knowledge of any particular person who is really suspected to be a smuggler and who has agents who are handsomely paid ?

A.—I have no idea, but I have heard from Magistrates and Excise officers who are dependable. While I was a Magistrate in Dibrugarh in 1925, a Marwari brought about 25 seers of Malwa opium and he was prosecuted. The case ended in conviction in the Court of Mr. Guha. I have heard also of a Marwari Senaram Mali who brought about 2 seers 48 tolas. There was another case in which a Nepali was caught. But I do not wish to mention details here as it may be impugning a certain class of people, and, therefore, I would not disclose the details.

MR. ROFFEY :—Where was the Nepali caught ?

A.—In Behali.

CHAIRMAN :—You suggest that a greater amount of opium is smuggled in Behali than elsewhere in the Sadr subdivision ?

A.—Yes, undoubtedly.

Q.—Is that foreign opium that you are mentioning ?

A.—Yes.

CHAIRMAN :—Now, I would like to ask you a few questions. First of all, do I understand from these replies that the policy has, to some extent, had a good effect on the consumers of the younger generation ?

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A.—In Behali.

CHAIRMAN :—You suggest that a greater amount of opium is smuggled in Behali than elsewhere in the Sadr subdivision ?

A.—Yes, undoubtedly.

Q.—Is that foreign opium that you are mentioning ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why is it? Is it because it is nearer the hills?

A.—People bring it from Cooch Behar. There is a number of people unregistered; the Excise Inspector estimates it at about 600 in Behali circle alone.

Q.—Is it also on account of the geographical position?

A.—No. The Marwari brought it from Dhansirimukh.

Q.—Is it very difficult to detect?

A.—Being near the hills, there is a greater opportunity for the smuggler. They come through hilly routes and sometimes by steamer and road. Now-a-days they are avoiding the ordinary paths where the preventive staff is kept. They avoid places like Golakganj and Lumding. They come by Cooch Behar and take night marches. Now-a-days they hire Nepalis for smuggling opium.

Q.—Have you detected any?

A.—We have detected one Dil Bahadur. He brought about 2 seers and the Excise staff got information that he was bringing it. It was hidden in a tin suit case, and the suit case itself was left in a *Muchi's* house. The house was searched.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Is this case still pending?

A.—Yes.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Who detected it?

A.—My Circle Inspector.

CHAIRMAN:—If the case is still pending, we do not want to hear of it.

MR. MITRA:—Then there is another case of Seran Mali Marwari. He is employed by a Marwari firm of Biswanath. He brought 1 seer 48 chattaks of Malwa opium.

Q.—Are there any more cases?

A.—This year there were 2 other cases—12 tolas in one and 5 tolas in the other. In these cases opium was brought from the Golaghat side.

Q.—Are these contraband opium?

A.—These are excise opium.

CHAIRMAN:—We do not want cases of excise opium. Are there any more cases of contraband opium in this year?

A.—In 1932-33, there was the case of Gurkha Bahadur Lama and we detected 2 seers 60 tolas. It was detected on the Behali side by the Excise Superintendent. There was another case

of Hiralal Sowai with 45 tolas, and one other case of Nalabhadra Mewar with 17 tolas of Cooch Behar opium. Again, there was a detection of 54 tolas of Marwari opium and also another of 69 tolas. The total is 5 seers 5 tolas of contraband opium.

Q.—Did they all come by steamer and train?

A.—Yes, in many of the cases these things are brought along with other articles of merchandise, and they are very difficult to detect. They keep the railway and steamer staff well paid so that no information is available.

Q.—That is your suspicion?

A.—Yes, no authentic proof can be given. There was a case in Dibrugarh where 6 seers of opium came along with other articles. It was detected in the station.

Q.—You guess that the amount that has been detected is only 5 per cent?

A.—It is not a guess, I put a hypothetical figure. More than that cannot be detected.

Q.—What I want to know is the basis of your inference that only 5 per cent. is detected. Why should it not be 50 or 90 or even cent. per cent?

A.—Because, as I have said, supposing a man goes to Cooch Bihar from Malwa. He would take the hill route and would bring it. Unless you know all the movements you cannot spot it.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—You say that because it is very difficult to make the detections, so smuggling is going on to a large extent. But if anybody says that as there is no detection there is no smuggling, would it be a wrong thing to say?

A.—That cannot be true. There is other information at our disposal.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—What other information?

A.—My Excise Inspector will tell you that every month there are cases. The spies come and say that there is a case of smuggling. But before a search can be made it is disposed of and nothing can be found. The difficulty is that before you put a stigma on a man, you must be fairly certain that he is wrong. For the purpose of forming our opinion about ordinary matters of life, we need not be absolutely positive.

MR. ROFFEY:—How many searches were made last year?

A.—I think about 12.

Q.—In how many cases did you succeed?

A.—Eight or 9.

Q.—When you suspect a person, you have the power to search him?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There have been only 12 cases of search, and in 8 or 9 you were successful?

A.—In this statement office has given only 5 cases.

CHAIRMAN :—You suspect there are many smugglers and you have certain names of persons whom you suspect although, of course, you cannot give it out to us.

A.—I suspect nearly all the Chinamen that reside here.

Q.—Why do you not search them?

A.—The difficulty is that sometimes we fail in our search and then we will be ridiculed.

Q.—What is the harm if you are ridiculed if it is a public duty?

A.—There may be other difficulties, such as a civil suit against us for damages. We will then have to disclose substantial proof.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—In every case, where you get an information, if you find something, then the information is true. But if you do not find anything, then also you say that the information is true?

A—But before I issue a search warrant, I must satisfy myself.

Q.—Do you make enquiries?

A.—Very often.

Q.—From whom?

A.—From the Excise officers. Supposing there is a Chainaman in the garden who is suspected. The Excise officer will come to me for a letter to the Manager. After making enquiries and ascertaining things, I will give him the letter.

Q.—In all cases where you search, you will assume that it is true?

A.—Naturally. Why should the officer take all the risks?

Q.—You assume it is true and on that basis you give the search warrant?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If he happens to be a Chinaman?

A.—Yes, I generally suspect.

Q.—If he is a Marwari ?

A.—I am not sure about them. But many of them are very respectable.

MR. ROFFEY:—How many Chinamen did you convict last year ?

A.—Two.

Q.—In how many cases did you search ?

A.—Five.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—How many Chinamen are there in this district ?

A.—Fifty or 60 I think. I do not know for certain. I have seen them round about this place.

Q.—You suspect them—is it because their country is full of opium ?

A.—Not only that. Chinamen bring it very generally through their agents. It comes with some parcel or other.

CHAIRMAN :—You have admitted here that this short-weight sale does not materially affect the success of the policy ?

A.—Because so far it is sold to people who have been refused passes in the past. If it gets into the hands of unregistered consumers, it does affect the success of the policy. Your policy is not to give opium to anybody who has not got a pass, but it is only to give it to those who have passes according to the quantity mentioned therein.

Q.—Let me explain the object of the policy. The object is that at the end of 10 years there would be no more opium issued from the Government treasury save to people above the age of 60. When the policy was instituted it was supposed that it will *first keep the younger generation from taking opium, and* secondly, it will stop many people by force from taking opium who are used to it. We may grant that some smuggled opium may be got ; but that smuggled opium may be driven out of Assam, to a great extent, by the preventive staff. That is the object of the policy. Now I would like to ask you in what way that object would be defeated if the licit sales of opium from the mahaldar's shop be continued for the next five years according to the policy ; for, after five years there will be no more sale of treasury opium.

A.—Supposing the mahaldars do not give shortweight. He is to give opium only to those people who have got passes. Now he has to give opium also to those who have not got passes. Those people could obtain them from the smuggler or from the

vendor who saves from short-weight sales and naturally as they are being partially supplied by one agency, it affects the success of your policy.

Q.—I do not follow your argument.

A.—One of the objects of your policy is that you do not want the people to get opium.

Q.—But we do not want that after five years the policy should fail. If they got now and they get after five years, the policy would still be successful because the amount of excisable opium distributed amongst the consumers will be nil except for those above the age of 50.

A.—If it is the quantity of opium that matters, in that case, I do not think shortweight does very much affect the success of the policy.

Q.—As a matter of fact if there be a large amount of smuggled opium then the whole object of doing good to the country is lost.

A.—How can you say that unless you know exactly how much opium is smuggled.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—We look to you to tell us about that.

A.—Nobody can give you any idea even to a near approximation of it.

CHAIRMAN :—Even the inference which the Excise officers are drawing is a guess ?

A.—Yes, it is a guess.

Q.—And it may happen to be far from the truth ?

A.—I cannot say it will be far from the truth. They are men on the spot, and they are experts in their sphere. They are probably nearer the truth than anybody else.

Q.—But they may happen to be over-jealous.

A.—Why should they be ? There are very many fair men among them.

Q.—But even fair men may make mistakes. So that every attempt to get at the amount of smuggled opium is based on some suspicion ?

A.—Yes. No doubt as I have already said, I have not been able to form any exact idea as to the quantity of smuggled opium.

Q.—Do you think it is a wise thing to give up such a policy if it is helping in preventing the younger generation from taking to this habit, and do you think we can act on mere suspicion of fears of smugglers who, in reality, may not be in existence at all?

A.—Then how does it happen that many of them are convicted?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Is it your advice that the policy should be revised? Even for the existence of that quantity of smuggled opium for which there has been conviction in this province?

A.—No. But I say it will be a very small percentage of opium that is expected.

Q.—Do you advise us to recommend revision of this policy because of these cases you have got conviction for?

A.—No, you should cry a halt, because as you are reducing the rations, smuggling is increasing.

Q.—But is only a guess work?

A.—No, if you look at the figures you will find that it is not guess work.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—Let us for a moment take it for granted that there is no smuggling besides the cases that have ended in conviction?

A.—I do not admit that.

Q.—I am supposing that for argument's sake.

A.—Why such an assumption?

Q.—I told you, it is for argument's sake and we want your opinion on it.

A.—If these were the only cases of smuggling, my advice is that you must continue the policy.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Then you cannot advise us to revise the policy if the amount detected is only 5 per cent. of the actual quantity smuggled.

A.—I am thinking whether it is only a quantitative method. It depends on how much has been smuggled [illegible] is detected. Unless you know the man, the [illegible] will never be able to detect

Mr. ROFFEY :—What my friend wants to know from you is what is the percentage of smuggling on which you would continue the policy and what is the percentage on which you would shut it down.

A.—Even if it is 50 per cent. I think we might just continue the policy. I do not say that you should detect all the 100 per cent. but even if you detect 50 per cent. of it, even then the policy may continue. But I say it cannot be 50 per cent. I consider that it is no where near it.

CHAIRMAN :—You have said that it is not good to go on assumptions, but it is only on assumption that you have told us there exists a large quantity of smuggled opium from the fact that there are some smugglers who have been caught. Could it not therefore be that other smugglers are not in existence really ?

A.—I am satisfied that there are others who are in existence. Only I cannot catch them. I can give you some names.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Then you know the names of these people ?

A.—I can give you the names if you want to know who are financing these smugglers.

Q.—Do you know the quantity that they bring ?

A.—Not the quantity. It happens like this. For instance, they go to Cooch Behar and bring 2 or 3 bundles and they hide these during the day and bring them over by night. You may think that these are all falsehoods, but I can tell you that they are not. This is how Dil Bahadur was caught.

EXCISE INSPECTOR :—In Seraram Mali's case, he came up by steamer and train. He brought opium from the Marwar side and kept it in his house.

Mr. ROFFEY :—Who financed him ?

A.—Two Marwari firms of Biswanath.

Srijut BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Did these things come out in the Court ?

A.—It would not be disclosed in the Court.

Mr. ROFFEY :—Do you think that with a larger preventive staff you could get more cases convicted ?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Q.—You do not think you have a sufficient preventive staff now?

A.—I have never met many of them; but at any rate I have met a few of these officers and they do not think they have sufficient staff.

Q.—Would it improve matters if some more Excise Inspectors are appointed for the Behali circle?

A.—I do not think so; one officer I consider is sufficient

Q.—Then why are there not more detections?

A.—I said, one officer was sufficient to carry on the duties of the Excise Inspector, but he may not be sufficient for the purpose of detections. For detections you have to put even on the routes.

Q.—Then do you consider the present number sufficient?

A.—I beg your pardon; I was talking about the district staff; when I said it was not sufficient I had not in mind the preventive special staff.

Q.—Under those circumstances, do you wish to have a further increase in the preventive staff or not?

A.—I am not yet in a position to give a definite opinion on that.

Q.—Does it not follow that smuggling would increase if the cut is continued and you would want a larger staff?

A.—Supposing the present staff continues, if you are able to give more rewards to the informers, and spies they may be able to cope with the work, ; it does not necessarily follow that we should have an increase in the staff.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—

Q.—You say that consumption has decreased because of this policy because people are now-a-days thinking that it is difficult to get opium passes. Then if you advise us to reopen the register and bring in the new addicts, will it not have a bad effect on the people and will they not think that it is easy to have opium passes again?

A.—Not necessarily, because as I say, the first registration was not perfect.

Q.—From what experience do you say like that?

A.—I was in Golaghat in 1925 while this registration was going on. I myself checked some lists.

Q.—What about the registration in 1929?

A.—I was in Goalpara then. At first in 1925, mauzadars and the muharrirs brought the lists. Some were checked by me, and some by the police officers. It was the I started checking in June and July. The

pressed us for sending these papers back very quickly, and an exhaustive list was hardly possible. On the day of checking, people did not come, and thinking that they were not keen, we had to cancel their names.

Q.—You thought that if they had been keen they would have come?

A.—Yes, we thought so.

Q.—What about the subsequent registration of 1929?

A.—In 1929, the Government order came that the consumers might have another chance. I remember going with the Civil Assistant Surgeon of Sibsagar. We went round and saw many cases, but he passed, I think, only about 25 per cent. of the cases that appeared before him.

Q.—Were you of the same opinion with him?

A.—What else could I do? Merely by seeing a man, how can I say if he is an addict. We were all in a hurry and if the doctor did not allow, I could not do anything but accept his recommendation.

Q.—Do you think that medical opinion is a sure guide?

A.—It is for the doctors to say. I cannot say anything about the reliability of medical opinion. Government have prescribed it as a guide and I do not say anything about this.

Q.—How long will you keep the registers open?

A.—Well, we shall say that this will be the last time and that no more chance will be given.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Just like "last night's" performance—"*Shesh rajani*"?

A.—I have no experience that way.

Q.—Supposing the same plea is put forward again and the opening of registers is applied for one more time.

A.—That is why I have said that you should notify that they will be given no more chance. You did not say so in 1929.

Q.—But as a matter of fact it was mentioned in 1929 that the register should be opened for the last time.

A.—If it had been said so, then I would not press for the opening of the register now. I would say that it should not be opened.

CHAIRMAN:—It is somehow wonderful that you did not know that it was the last chance. It was in my time, and I well remember this.

A.—In that case I should not ask for opening the registers again. Why should you do it every time and go on saying that this is the last time? As it has already been said in 1929,

do not open the register again, that is my advice. We cannot do anything for them, and if you open it now it will become an eternal problem.

Q.—Do you think they should be helped ?

A.—Well ; that is what people say. "If a rich man can have his whiskey, why should not the poor man have some opium ?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Every one must have something, is it not ?

A.—Yes, why not the poor people ?

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Then why should not rich people take opium if it is good ?

A.—I cannot say ; I do not take opium.

Q.—Are they not reduced to poverty by taking opium ?

A.—Many people are reduced to poverty by gambling at the races. You have not stopped it and your legislature can never touch these people You can never touch the stronger interests but you only want to touch the poor people

Q.—What is your advice now ?

A.—My advice now is that if you have aleady said that that was the last chance, then you should not open the register again.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—Your advice will mean that the people will be left as they are, and you will be allowing them to break the law.

A.—What other alternative have I ?

SRIJUT ROH [illegible] you not watch those men

A.—It is impossible. There is not only one suspected man. He will always be changed, if it is Dil Bahadur this time, his financiers will engage somebody else next time.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—If they go on continuing as it is, do you think they will give it up ?

A.—I do not think.

Q.—Do you consider that they would be forced to give it up as the price grows dearer and dearer ?

A.—That is a future contingency.

Q.—If this policy is continued, even registered consumers will have the same trouble.

A.—You are forcing them, but I may say, that this will not be abolished.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Is it because you think that Government will not abolish it ?

A.—It is not that. I mean that contraband opium will not go.

Examined by MR. ROFFEY :—

Q.—In the beginning of your statement with reference to the consumption you say; "During the last 4 years treasury opium was reduced from 2,226 seers to 1,357 seers." But this reduction is much more than 10 per cent. per annum.

A.—There is a table given us by Government every year and we reduce the rations accordingly. This 10 per cent. is only roughly correct. If you go on reducing 10 per cent. every year, then at the end of 10 years also you will still have a small quantity left over. I think the calculation is nearly correct. From the 2,226 seers you deduct 222 seers for the first year and so on. And again there will be some people that have died and their ration must be taken away. So I think that the figure 1,357 is nearly correctly worked out.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—What are the remedies that you suggest for stopping this smuggling ?

A.—Open the registers. I consider that the cut has been far too drastic.

Q.—You agreed that the registers need not be opened provided it was said in 1929 that it was the final opening ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now what is your second suggestion ?

A.—Give the people back the rations they used to enjoy two years ago ; as I said already, the cut has been far too drastic.

Q.—What do you mean by "two or three years ago." Can you tell me from what year the cut has been made ?

A.—1925.

CHAIRMAN :—It started in 1928.

A.—I thought it was 1925.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Then you suggested restoring the rations of two or three years back in the belief that the cut was started in 1925 ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—That is your second suggestion. Have you got any more suggestions ?

A.—Opium should be sold in packets. One other suggestion I can make is that you should have an all-India price for opium.

CHAIRMAN :—Would it improve matters if opium is sold by Government officers ?

A.—I do not think so, but I think you might sell opium through post offices as quinine is being sold. I do not like the idea of Government employing a class of people exclusively for the sale of opium ?

Q.—Would you approve that the Excise Inspectors can sell opium besides their other duties ?

A.—Yes; but that may mean more officers.

Q.—Why do you want to restore rations ?

A.—I have already said that the cut is far too drastic.

Q.—Do you feel for these consumers ?

A.—If you were in my place you would feel for them. They come and fall before you and cry like anything.

Q.—As a District Officer do you feel for them and do you advise that they should be given opium ?

A.—Opium acts as a cure in some troubles like dysentery If a man's ration is cut, say, from 4 to 2 tolas, he believes that he will suffer from all troubles and that nothing else but opium can cure him. Why should you deprive him of this enjoyment ?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—You give this advice even though their belief is erroneous.

A.—Many people in the world are having beliefs that are erroneous, and unless they are perfectly sure they will continue having it. In the case of an opium-eater he believes in the cure.

MR. ROFFEY :—Supposing his belief is wrong.

A.—How can you be certain of that ?

Q.—My medical man says that.

A.—The opium-eater has found it beneficial.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Supposing an opium-eater says that he has been taking opium for a long number of years. Would you then give him opium ?

A.—If they do not die and if it does not affect their health I would not give him.

Q.—What about consumers who are convicted and who remain in jail ?

A.—They are not getting any opium. In one case, they gave as substitute tincture opia. The addict did not die I believe they can be cured, but the thing is that they take to it after their release.

Q.—What is the source from which they take ?

A.—Partly shortweight and mostly contraband opium.

Q.—What is the number of unregistered opium consumers?

A.—One thousand.

Q.—Do you say that all shops give shortweights?

A.—Most of them.

Q.—How many shops have you?

A.—Thirty-five.

Q.—In how many shops, do you think, the lessees do not give shortweight?

A.—I cannot say that to any degree of definiteness. If I knew the people who gave shortweight they would not be there.

Q.—You said, most of them give shortweight.

A.—Yes, most of them do.

Q.—There must be some shops where they do not give?

A.—Yes, there may be one or two.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—How do you distinguish?

A.—By personal impression of the vendor, when there has been no cases against him and when I see the man, I get an impression of him.

Q.—You can distinguish easily between an honest man and a dishonest man by looking at him?

A.—No. Then I would be an Almighty.

Q.—Have you detected these cases?

A.—As I say, the margin is very small and it is difficult to detect.

Q.—What is the margin?

A.—One or two annas. It is another 10 per cent. cut. It is very difficult to detect.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURI:—Why do you not cancel the lease?

A.—Because you have to put the same man there.

CHAIRMA[illegible] n will th[illegible] leaving a culprit there?

A.—It is [illegible] have [illegible] it is another thing to be able to satisfy [illegible]

SRIJUT ROI[illegible] AR C[illegible] RI:—So your position [illegible] at on me [illegible] you c[illegible] way the license [illegible]

[illegible] hat is s[illegible]

[illegible] t on [illegible] you [illegible] there are s[illegible]

[illegible] nd s[illegible]

[illegible] eca[illegible] ing [illegible] inion.

Q.—But do you not see that this is a great issue concerning the health of the public and it is a question of life and death for them?

A.—In this case you ask my opinion, and you can decide as you like after hearing my views.

Q.—Can you not deal with these lessees departmentally?

A.—But the cases will have eventually to go before the Magistrate and then they engage defence.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You say that there are 1,000 unregistered consumers. May I know the ages of these persons? Can you say whether they are young people or middle-aged men, or old people?

A.—I do not think they are young people. So far I have been here only about three months and there has been no application from any young persons, I do not remember any young person under 25 applying.

Q.—Then there are persons between 25 and 35?

A.—There also I think, there are one or two cases from among the garden coolies.

Q.—Have you got any one between 30 and 40?

A.—Several.

Q.—Can you tell us how many?

A.—I cannot give the exact figures.

Q.—Can it be 10 per cent?

A.—It may be 25 to 30 per cent of cases.

Q.—How many out of these 1,000 unregistered consumers are Assamese?

A.—They are mostly Nepalese and garden coolies. I think about 80 per cent. of them are.

MR. ROFFEY:—How many Nepalese, and how many tea garden coolies?

A.—I think about 50 per cent. garden coolies and 30 per cent. Nepalese.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—The remaining 20 per cent are Assamese?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the total number of new passes that you have issued recently?

A.—From 1929 to 1932 I have issued 560 passes and 75 per cent. of them would be to garden coolies. That is my idea.

CHAIRMAN :—I want to know how many new passes were issued during the last three months ?

A.—I have not got the figures.

Q.—Can you give us the figures to-morrow ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—We shall be obliged if you can give us.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—How many applications did you receive ?

A.—I cannot tell you that, because there are many garden applications that may have been rejected on the spot. They come through the garden doctor and as between garden doctors and garden authorities they may have been rejected. Such cases do not come to me at all, and only those that they recommend come to us. If you want we can give you that number.

MR. ROFFEY :—Do I understand that out of 1,000 unregistered consumers, 560 have received passes ?

A.—These 1,000 unregistered consumers are in addition to the 560 to whom passes were issued.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—These 1,000 unregistered consumers, did you calculate in 1933 after the issue of 560 passes from 1929-32 ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the 1,000 includes also those whom you have rejected.

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many of these 1,000 have you rejected ?

A.—I cannot answer that, because the whole 1,000 is merely guess work of the Excise Superintendent.

Q.—We would like to know whether you can give us the number of applications rejected.

A.—Do you mean the applications rejected by the Civil authorities here ? I think we can give you.

Q.—We want applications rejected from 1929 32 and also...

A.—I am sorry we have not got a record of all these applications. These are "C class" papers, and they are thrown out after one year.

CHAIRMAN :—We should be glad to have the figures you can give. I think you can give us the figure for last year.

A.—I can give you the figures from the 1st April 1933 to the end of June 1933.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Do you mean to say that the price of contraband opium as also of surplus opium is the same?

A.—I have given very clear reasons for that, but you may agree with me or you may disagree with me.

Q.—Can you tell us whether the quantity of opium sold that is got by short-weight sales is more or the quantity of smuggled opium that is sold is more?

A.—I told you at the beginning that no one can be sure about the quantity of smuggled opium.

Q.—If I say that the smuggled quantity is definitely infinitesimal in comparison with short-weight sales, shall I be right?

A.—Not from the general knowledge that I have. I should not agree with you there.

Q.—How much will you put it at?

A.—I cannot be definite. Very often I am receiving information and that is all.

(After lunch.)

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You say that there should be no increase in the price of the treasury opium?

A.—It is already very hard for people to pay Rs. 2 per tola.

Q.—Do you recommend it because of the hardship, or is it for any other reason?

A.—Hardship is the main reason at the present moment. Another equally good reason would be that Assam price is comparatively higher than that in any other place in India, and that encourages smuggling.

Q.—What is the price in Bengal?

EXCISE SUPERINTENDENT:—I do not know; I can give it afterwards.

Q.—Do you say that it is due to the cheaper rate of price of opium in other neighbouring provinces?

A.—I say that on account of that fact the price of opium here should not be raised. Otherwise there would be some encouragement to smuggling; disparity in price should not be made an additional factor in smuggling.

Q.—Why is the price of opium saved from short- ... more than the price of the smuggled opium?

A.—Because it serves as an insurance against risk. The smugglers run the risk of being caught, prosecuted and punished. Many vendors have been punished like that for selling such opium.

Q.—Is it due to the risk involved or is it due to the fact that the supply is much smaller than the demand?

A.—That is partly true, but the main thing is that it is an insurance against risk.

Q.—Is not the price going down on account of economic depression?

A.—No doubt; formerly it used to be Rs. 3 to Rs. 8. I have known this.

Q.—Will you agree with me when I say that in any business there will be smuggling or shortweight sale?

A.—Why should there be smuggling unless there is a prohibition or preferential duty?

Q.—Was there not smuggling before preferential treatment?

A.—If the price is higher in Assam there would be smuggling.

Q.—There is no question of "if."

A.—I have not worked here for long, but I heard that there used to be some smuggling. It might have been very small and negligible.

Q.—Then you suggest that smuggling would remain?

A.—Yes, unless you can make the price uniform everywhere.

Q.—You want to issue passes to proper persons with the help of a committee?

A.—I think you mean by "proper person" one who is considered fit for a pass. The committee appointed will take evidence of respectable persons and see whether the applicant has been taking opium and for how long. These are the factors that would determine.

Q.—You do not like to issue passes to those who have taken to this habit recently; say, those who have taken to it for five or ten years?

A.—If a man has been taking it for five years, surely he ought to be given a pass.

Q.—Whom do you think the committee should consist of?

A.—It will be a local committee for every district.

Q.—Is it of officials and non-officials?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you mean to say that a person who has been in the habit of taking opium for five years should be given a pass?

A.—Why 5 years? Even a man taking it for three years should be given.

MR. ROFFEY:—Do you recommend that, irrespective of quantity?

A.—No. Not irrespective of quantity. He should have to prove that he is taking a reasonable amount.

Q.—What is a reasonable amount?

A.—One tola a month, not less than that.

Q.—I think you are not in favour of giving passes to those below 30. Why?

A.—Because they are strong healthy people. Most people who take opium feel that it is a stimulant.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Did you ask the doctor about it?

A.—Yes, but nobody has given me any decisive opinion.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You fix 30 years as the minimum?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you want that a stimulant like opium should be given to persons of 35 years of age?

A.—It largely depends on the constitution of the man. If a man is decrepit, you can give him opium

Q.—If you find a man of 50 years very vigorous, what do you suggest?

A.—The question of men of fifty has already been settled.

Q.—Supposing he is 49 years.

A.—If he is vigorous, then I would not give him.

Q.—You would not give him even though if you find he has been taking it for five years previously?

A.—No.

Q.—So the whole criterion is health?

A.—Yes; physical constitution.

Examined by Rai BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—From your evidence it is found that you have given your view that the policy has proved a failure?

A.—I said, the policy is a dubious success, if at all.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—If a failure, it is a dubious failure.

A.—I should not say like that.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Can you say to what extent the failure is due to the fault of the people themselves?

A.—The failure is largely due to the drastic nature of the cut. I do not think that the people are at fault. Only there has been a very rapid cut.

Q.—And you consider it should not be continued any longer?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have also stated that there are some 600 unregistered consumers in the Behali circle?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any idea how these persons get their quota?

A.—They get it very largely from smugglers.

Q.—Do you admit that short-weight sale is a common practice here in this district, specially in the Behali circle?

A.—It is not very serious here.

Q.—In your opinion it is not very common among the lessees in your di[illegible]?

A.—Not v[illegible] on at any rate in Behali.

Q.—How [illegible] ees o[illegible] r district disposed of the s[illegible] tain [illegible] eight

Th[illegible] unre[illegible] sumers.

[illegible] v [illegible] ea of [illegible]?

[illegible] Rs. [illegible]6 a tola at the present

Q.—To check smuggling in the Behali circle do you think that an increase in the preventive staff will have the desired effect?

A.—I do not think you can alt gether stop it.

Q.—You think that it will still go on?

A.—That is my view.

Q.—What means can you suggest for tackling the problem of shortweight in your district?

A.—I have no more practical suggestion to offer than what I have suggested in the memorandum that I submitted.

Q.—You have also said that medical certificate is a sure guide for granting new passes?

A.—It is the only thing which is at present recognised as a guide.

Q.—What do you think yourself?

A.—I myself think that evidence from local witnesses is more satisfactory than medical certificate.

Q.—You think that a medical man cannot say definitely whether a person is an addict or not?

A.—They always say definitely because they are asked to say. I do not feel satisfied that they can decide it either way.

Q.—Are you in favour of a small local committee then?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Either to reject or to grant passes?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Whom should the committee consist of?

A.—The Deputy Commissioner and two members or the Subdivisional Officer and two members.

Q.—Is it excluding the medical officer?

A.—Yes, because we have his certificate.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Don't you think that a confirmed addict cannot reduce the quantity of opium he consumes every day?

A.—I am almost sure on that point. It is very difficult for a confirmed addict to reduce the quantity of opium.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—You mean voluntarily?

A.—No, he would not reduce it at all.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—Do you think tha the opium-eaters whose rations are cut down already on accour of the present policy should get their full rations?

A.—Yes, I have already said they should be restored t their rations of two years ago.

Q.—Do you think that the present margin of profit allowe by Government to the vendors of opium is adequate for ru ning the shop without resorting to other dishonest means?

A.—In cases of some of the large shops it ought to be fairl sufficient to any ordinary middle class man with whom the sho are settled. In about two-thirds of the shops, I know it is so that he would be able to keep himself and his family i comfort. It is not the case for all shops. In some cases

Q.—Is it owing to the present system that the vend-fee not equal in all shops?

A.—It is different in different localities. It depends on th distance of the locality and the consumption.

Q.—Who determines the vend-fee?

A.—The Deputy Commissioner on whose recommendation is fixed.

Q.—In that case is not the Deputy Commissioner responsibl for allowing a sufficient margin of profit for the vendor to ru his shop in an honest way?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You were in charge of several subdivisions during th last 10 years. Have you disposed of the applications fron opium-eaters in the same way as you disposed of them in th Darrang district lately?

A.—It is only in Goalpara where I had a few application in 1929 and most of them were rejected.

Q.—Is it a fact that the rations for Goalpara are fixed onl at 8 seers for the whole of the subdivision?

A.—It may be so. It is only a very small place and ther are only two shops, one at Dhupdhara and the other a Rangjuli.

Q.—Did you give facilities to all the applicants to come to the centres fixed by you and did you attend at them along witl the Civil Surgeon?

A.—I think some notices were issued beforehand and we attended the two centres, Dhupdhara and Rangjuli.

Q.—Am I to understand from your evidence here that there was no sufficient time, and no facility was given to these applicants to file applications in time for new passes?

A.—You see, these things happened about 4 years ago.

Q.—I am referring to the applications that were filed last year?

A.—If you are talking about 1929, I can speak only of Goalpara because I was not here last year.

Q.—Don't you think that this opium habit can be cured by drugs?

A.—Yes, you have the League of Nations' discovery.

Q.—I am not referring to the Modino system of treatment. The evidence given before us by several medical officers is that the habit can be cured by drugs?

A.—It may be so. I am not aware. The point is that a man may be cured for a time but he will again take to it.

Q.—Have you met any such men?

A.—Several people who have been in prison and who had to give it up have taken to it again.

Q.—Do you remember any concrete case?

A.—I remember one or two cases in Goalpara.

Q.—Do you renew licenses in cases of persons who come out of prison again?

A.—Not at once. Again he is to go to the medical officer and if the doctor recommends I can renew it again.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—I think you have already stated that passes should be refused to all unregistered opium-eaters below the age of 30?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that the present supply is adequate to meet the demand of your district?

A.—The present supply of treasury opium is not sufficient to meet the demand.

Q.—You have also stated already that the continuation of the present cut will bring more hardship to the unregistered consumers as well as to the public?

A.—As regards the unregistered consumers it is a question that has to be answered on hypothetical inference of the basis of supply and demand.

CHAIRMAN :—And what about the public?

A.—I do not think there is any inconvenience so far as I can see to the public.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Am I to understand from your evidence that you are in favour of continuing the present cut for the remaining five years?

A.—I think we should call a halt and see the result.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—Do you think that there is a strong feeling against the habit of taking opium?

A.—Yes, amongst the educated public.

Q.—Do you think that it is ruining the people?

A.—Yes, in the Assam Valley it is ruining the people.

Q.—Do you wish that Government should take drastic measures to stop it?

A.—But what right has the majority to coerce the minority.

Q.—I only want to know whether there is such a feeling?

A.—Yes, it is the feeling of the educated people. I am not sure whether it is the feeling of the majority.

Q.—Somebody suggested to us that this system of settling the shops with the mahaldars should be abolished with a view to stop short-weight sales. What do you think of that?

A.— y own suggestion is that we should sell it in the form of tablets.

Q.—You do not approve of that suggestion?

A.—I think anyone who comes here will take to short-weight.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—It is the first time that you are in charge of an opium-eating district?

A.—Yes, quite. I was in Golaghat. But then the policy had not begun.

Q.—Your views are based on the study of this question recently. You have studied this question carefully after you thought you would be required to deal with it.

A.—I do not think I have studied it very much. I had to deal with it only as an administrator of the Excise Department.

Q.—Did you examine the figures of contraband opium before the cut was introduced?

A.—The figures were given by the office, and I have no idea of what happened before the policy was introduced.

Q.—Have you heard of any cases in which there was a haul of about 38 seers of opium?

A.—Yes, I have seen it in the Excise Report.

Q.—What is the maximum you have heard of since after the present system was introduced?

A.—About 10 seers, 12 seers; like that.

Q.—Do you know that in 1923-24 there was a detection of 38 seers of opium?

A.—I have not heard of this case.

Q.—There is another case in 1924-25 and also before this. In the same year two upcountry men were also arrested with, say, four seers of opium. The case of 1923-24 of 38 seers was Malwa opium and it was reported by police officers who originally made the enquiry. The information of the "Salween" steamer case was afterwards made over to the special branch which succeeded in arresting one of the accused only in 1923?

A.—I have not heard of that.

Q.—Have you heard of any such other cases?

A.—I have not heard of cases of such singularly large quantities.

Q.—Now, if I say that smuggling was going on even before this system was introduced and that there were big cases of smuggling, then would you not agree that smuggling was not directly an outcome of this policy?

A.—Yes, I agree that smuggling is not the direct outcome of this policy, but I should say that the extent of smuggling has probably increased.

Q.—But how can you say unless you have a comparative statement?

A.—You never had such particularly persistent cases like those in the Darrang district.

Q.—What I am asking is only this: have you figures before you to prove that there is more or less smuggling?

A.—I have already said that no one can be sure.

Q.—So then, honestly speaking, you say, it is very difficult?

A.—In reply to the first question I have already [illegible] it is very difficult to estimate.

Q.—Therefore, it is very difficult to advise?

A.—But some change in the policy is needed. There is a large body of smugglers; and you can suggest another remedy if you cannot accept mine.

Q.—The remedy you suggest for stopping smuggling is to ensure Government getting revenue that the smugglers are now getting, and you are not suggesting remedies that would eradicate the evil.

A.—My main object is to legalise an illegality which is persistently repeated for the last few years. I am not speaking from the revenue point of view.

Q.—You say that opium consumption is going on through illicit sources and therefore you must divert consumers from illicit to licit sources. By that you will divert also the revenue from going into illicit hands?

A.—The question of money has not at all entered into my idea.

Q.—I am very glad and it is very refreshing to hear it from you. You say you are not in the least concerned whether smugglers get it or the Government get the money so long as the evil is going on?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You see before your eyes that people are getting opium stealthily and that they run the risk of prosecution. In order to avoid all that you suggest as a remedy is that they should go and take it from the proper source. That is all you want?

A.—I say that instead of driving the movement underground it should remain in the open.

Q.—But then you have not taken into consideration that this habit has been eradicated to some extent.

A.—So long as opium is sold in other parts of India you cannot eradicate it from Assam alone.

Q.—The advice which you are giving to this Committee now —that the people must go to licit sources—is not one that can eradicate the evil.

A.—I have already said that you cannot eradicate the evil so long as it exists in other parts of India.

Q.—I am asking you only this: You are not suggesting this remedy for the reduction of the opium habit?

A.—No.

Q.—This remedy cannot aim even [illegible] dual reduction?

A.—I suggest tha[illegible] ou should cr[illegible] nd try its effect. You should also [illegible] en back to [illegible] s of two years ago, and then th[illegible] atisfied.

Q.—At one time, I heard you say that it is impossible to expect a reduction so long as it obtains in other parts of India ?

A.—Yes, I hold to that statement. You may not be able to eradicate it completely, but you may very largely reduce it. There are methods.

Q.—The methods which you suggest now is this that unregistered consumers......

A.—Your questions are so framed that one cannot give the answer 'yes or no'. I do not suggest this for reduction alone, but I said it was for legalising an illegality.

Q—I am not concerned with it. My object is to see whether this opium habit can be got rid of ?

A.—I have said again, that it is impossible to eradicate it completely so long as other parts of India are allowing it.

Q.—Is it possible to eradicate it to the extent of reducing it in cases of persons under 50 years of age ?

A.—You can gradually reduce it

Q.—Give me the method. You do not approve of the 10 per cent. cut ?

A—The method is this : one method would be, as these pass-holders die, gradually it will be extinguished ; then the whole body of opium-eaters should die out.

Q.—We should wait till the death of all opium-eaters ; that is your suggestion ?

A.—Yes, that will be a normal development ; and you won't have to wait long ; it may fructify in your life time. And then, you need not issue passes at all in future

Q.—After what year ?

A.—Once you have brought the unregistered consumers into the register, you will say that no more passes should be issued. But if the Government have already said that in 1929, you need not open the register again.

Q.—That is one of your methods, namely, to wait till the present set of opium consumers die out ?

A—Yes, that is the path of least resistence. That is one method by which you do not annoy anybody.

Q.—But are you sure that no more passes should be given to anybody in any circumstances ? Even to persons above 50 ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are in favour of cancellation of passes of persons under 30 years of age ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You mean except on medical grounds ?

A.—That qualification exists.

Q.—Will you cancel those under 30 that now exist ?

A.—I have not examined them. But I should like to cancel them.

Q.—So that above the age of 30 if you follow this path of least resistence, you will have to wait for 30 years ?

A.—In the meantime you may have a smaller cut. For instance, make this cut, biennial or triennial. As I have said, the cut is far too drastic. And it is a question of method, rather than of opinion.

Q.—Do you think that as a result of all the methods that you have mentioned you will be able to check smuggling ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So you will not issue passes to those under 30 and you will also cancel passes that now remain for those under 30 ?

A.—Yes, it would be considerably reduced if those unregistered consumers are brought on record. Smuggling will largely come down. I think that persons under 25 have, to my knowledge, never applied.

No. 12.

The Committee next examined—

MR. W. MILBURNE, Manager, Dhendai Tea Estate,
and
MR. F. G. METCALFE, Manager, Bamgaon Tea Estate.

Examined by THE CHAIRMAN—

Q.—Are you both of the same opinion ?

MR. METCALFE :—Yes.

Q.—You have read the questionnaire of the Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you submitted any written statement ?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you wish to express any views on any particular points that are in the questionnaire ?

A.—My personal knowledge on the subject is very limited, really.

Q.—How many consumers have you on your garden ?

A.—Two.

MR. MILBURNE :—I have 19 on my garden.

Q.—What is your labour force ?

A.—One thousand and two hundred adults.

MR. METCALFE :—In my garden I have about 600.

MR. MILBURNE :—Out of the 19 consumers, there are 13 registered and 6 unregistered.

Q.—How do the unregistered consumers get their opium ?

A.—I can tell you only by asking the unregistered consumers. I think undoubtedly they get illicit opium from villagers. But the question which I cannot get them to answer is where they actually get it from—from which shop ?

Q.—Do they get it from anyone who is dealing in foreign opium ?

A.—I very much doubt if they know the difference between foreign opium and treasury opium.

Q.—You have information that they purchase their rations from the existing opium shops ?

A.—I have got the information, but I cannot tie it down to them. They are not giving the opinion in that way, but I can tell you that they can get it from the shops and villagers.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—Are these six unregistered consumers new comers or old men ?

A.—One is practically a new-comer, and the others have remained here for some time.

Q.—Did they acquire the habit in their country ?

A.—In every case they acquired it before they came here.

Q.—Why do you not get passes for them ?

A.—It is extremely difficult.

Q.—Why ?

A.—First of all, you have got to get the man up to come to you. For some reason or other he does not come. Then if he comes you send him to the doctor. Then very often he has to go to Tezpur and appear there.

Q.—In any case, Government will readily give a pass to the new-comer.

A.—In certain cases, I have got them; but ordinarily it takes about three months I think that under the present s[illegible] it ought to be easier for the garden coolies to [illegible] quickly if medical certificate is obtained.

Q.—Probably this can be remedied by Government. But don't you think, these people would be able to give up the habit ?

A.—No, distinctly not.

Q.—I think you will be glad to have coolies who do not take opium ?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Did you ever try through your garden doctors to make them give up the habit by some means or other ?

A.—We tried to make them give up. I have in one case known a man give it up. He deposited the pass with me. I have that pass actually in my office at the present moment. It is three months now he has given it up since, but unfortunately he has taken to drink, and it is pretty much the same.

Q.—Which sort of labour do you prefer—the drunkard or the opium-eater ?

A.—Personally, I would prefer the opium-eater.

Q.—Why ?

A.—Because an opium-eater is distinctly not truculent, and as soon as he get opium he works faithfully. Only when he has exhausted his ration towards the end of the month, he becomes troublesome.

MR. ROFFEY :—How many of these 19 are addicts ?

A.—I would like to know what exactly you mean by addicts. Do you mean regular consumers ?

Q.—Yes, regular consumers for some years ?

A.—The whole of the 19 are addicts with the exception of 3.

Q.—What economic position do these coolies hold at present—I mean in what status are they ?

A.—They vary. In one particular case, he has actually gone to bits, and certainly, I would hardly know him.

Q.—Are their wives also opium-eaters ?

A.—May be.

Q.—Can you tell me roughly the monthly consumption of each coolie.

A.—It is about 1 tola. But after the 10 per cent. cut, he exhausts his ration on about the 25th of the month, and then he is absolutely incapable of work till he gets a sufficient supply. He purchases it from the mahaldars.

Q.—If he has the money?

A.—He seems to get it somehow. I am really speaking of the man who has money, and he gets it somewhere.

Q.—I take it that all the opium-eaters have only the pay they get and nothing else?

A.—Their pay, their rice and their land.

Q.—They can sell the rice?

A.—When they can sell it, they do so.

Q.—With regard to the Government cut, are you in favour of it?

A.—I am not.

Q.—You consider it should be stopped?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And have no further cut?

A.—Yes. That is our view.

MR. METCALFE:—I also say that the Tezpur Sub-Committee are of the same opinion.

Q.—May I take it that the percentage of opium-eaters of your garden is abnormal?

MR. MILBURNE:—From the figures, I may say that they are abnormal.

Q.—Have you got the figure with you?

A.—I have only one figure. With a labour force of 907 six have passes, and six have no passes. Further details I have not the time to get, but Colonel Ritchie will be coming to-morrow, and he will give you those figures then.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—You say there should be no further cut?

A.—No. No further cut.

Q.—Your association is also of the same opinion?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the reasons?

A.—Because previously, before the cut was started—I am speaking roughly about 1925-26—the majority of the opium-eaters simply went on, and you—could hardly tell whether they were opium-eaters Now, the majority of my opium-eaters, during the last few days of the month, simply cannot work.

Q.—You are speaking of the garden coolies.

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Q.—You are speaking of the garden coolies.

A.—Yes. They simply lie down and they are incapable of working. Their brain seems to be almost entirely gone.

Q.—You have a medical officer for your garden?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you keep the consumers under observation?

A.—No, because the Chief Medical Officer only pays visits.

Q.—Did you not consult him?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you consult with him whether these persons could be cured of the habit by means of drugs?

A.—No, I cannot say I have.

Q.—Do you know that these opium addicts can go on without opium when they are convicted and remain in jail?

A.—No, I have no information. But in the Army, they used to get it.

Q.—I am not speaking of the Army; I am telling you about the jails.

A.—I do not know.

Q.—The point is: Have you tried to cure them of this habit?

A.—No, I have no method of knowing how to cure.

Q.—Would you try, if you know the methods?

A.—Yes; if I thought that there was a chance.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—May I understand from your evidence that there should be no further cut?

A.—I distinctly say that there should be no further cut.

Q.—The present policy of the Government to apply for new passes for the coolies is very difficult?

A.—It is difficult. I am talking from the opium-eaters' point of view.

MR. METCALFE.—And there is a good deal of misery caused for the poor fellows who are waiting for their opium.

Q.—The ration is not sufficient for opium-eaters?

MR. MILBURNE:—They exhaust their rations by the third week of each month.

Q.—Do they remain incapable of work for the last week for want of opium when they have exhausted their quota?

A.—They simply cannot work, and their brain is gone. I know the day when they get the opium. They get very bright and get to work well.

Q.—Do you send them to hospital?

A.—Not, unless a man is really seriously ill, you cannot send a man to hospital for mere refusal to work.

Q.—Out of 1,200 adult labour force, you have only 19 addicts.

A.—Yes, that I know of.

Q.—Has anyone applied to you to try for securing passes for them from the Government?

A.—Yes all of them have applied in the first instance, but generally I make enquiries to know whether the man is an opium-eater or not.

Q.—Do you know at what rates, these unregistered opium-eaters are taking opium from the neighbouring shops?

A.—I cannot exactly say that they are taking from the shops, but I think, they do take from the villagers and the shops. The usual amount is two or three rupees per tola.

Q.—Do they earn the wages for buying this required quota by the middle or third week of the month, or before any time of their pay day?

A.—They may possibly run out, but how they manage I do not know. They often think, I would stop the sources from where they get it, and as is natural, they would not tell me fully.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—What is your idea about opium. Do you think it is very bad?

A.—I certainly do.

Q.—About this reduction policy, if it is followed don't you think it will help people in getting themselves rid of the habit? Do you support the policy?

A.—No; I do not think it will be successful.

MR. METCALFE:—It is difficult to control illicit traffic

Q.—Have you got any idea about mahaldars? Can you say what sort of people they are generally?

A.—I cannot really criticise them. I do not feel exactly fit to criticise them

Q.—Some people say, this system of settling shops with mahaldars should be abolished. Do you like the idea?

A.—I cannot express any opinion.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—How long have you been in Assam?

MR. METCALFE:—Nineteen years in the Assam Valley.

MR. MILBURNE:—Twenty-two years.

Q.—Do you know that formerly also the Assamese people used to take opium and that this habit was more general with the indigenous people?

A.—I can only say from hearsay. It is very general in Assam.

Q.—Do you know that the Assamese people are trying to give up this habit and reduce their consumption?

A.—I have known of no body trying to give it up.

Q.—You have no idea?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you wish that these people should get rid of this habit?

A.—I do not see why it should be suppressed altogether. It cannot be done to begin with.

Q.—Gradually?

A.—No.

Q.—By putting them on a small ration day by day?

A.—It is a question for medical men; but I consider it cannot be cured.

Q.—So you do not believe in genuine cure, even if opium is made unavailable?

A.—I think, he will probably die. If you cut the man's ration, he may die.

Q.—Have you seen such cases?

A.—I have seen one of my men waiting for his opium. If he does not get, he is too miserable for words.

Q.—Doctors say, he will be in extreme misery, but he will not die?

A.—Doctors ought to know. Copious amount of tea is a strong relief when he is in misery. It might make him more cheerful for the time being, but whether the effect would be permanent or not, I do not know.

Q.—These coolies are imported from other places, such as Orissa?

A.—Yes, from Ganjam.

Q.—Do these people also convert others to the habit of opium-eating?

MR. MILBURNE:—Distinctly not

CHAIRMAN:—Do they administer to the babies when they cry?

A.—They may, but that does not extend to coolies in the garden.

Q.—Did you make enquiries if their wives got the habit?

A.—They may have.

Q.—Supposing the people of the province wanted that this opium should be entirely prohibited; would you oppose it on the ground that the labour force need it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—On the ground of a few opium consumers that you have in your garden, you want the Government to carry on this trade?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Even though the rest of the people want it stopped?

A.—Why do they want to stop it?

Q.—Because this is a poison; they have realised it. As a matter of fact, this opium has been a great curse, and the opium-eaters are known as *kanias*, which is a term of contempt. The rest of the other provinces look down upon Assamese because they are opium-eaters The Assamese people also now realise this fact and they want the total prohibition, whatever may be the consequence. In these circumstances, do you oppose it and insist on the Government carrying on the trade?

A.—I have no objection, if the Assamese want prohibition; but I should say that the people who want to use it may be allowed it.

CHAIRMAN:—Is it possible to know the coolie who is in the habit of taking opium?

A.—It is very difficult. You could not an opium-eater and who is a non-opium-eater.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Supposing I discover that a particular coolie has the opium habit when he first comes, and I say that he can go back as I do not want an opium-eater.

MR. DAWSON :—At whose expense will he go back ?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—At the expense of Government.

MR. METCALFE :—Would you send him away because he is an opium-eater ? No, let him have his opium in moderation. He may happen to be a very good man otherwise.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Can he take opium in moderation ?

MR. METCALFE :—In some cases, they do.

Q.—Do they not increase the dose.

A.—Under the present system of cut, they cannot.

Q.—So you approve of the idea of cut ?

MR. MILBURNE :—They cannot increase under *this* system, but I do not approve of the cut policy.

Q.—If they have a craving for an increase ?

A.—I would not agree to give them an increase.

MR. METCALFE :—Let them be allowed in moderation.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Cannot they have from villagers and other illicit sources ?

A.—They do get like that.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—What practical methods would you suggest to stop these illicit sources ?

A.—It is impossible to make a suggestion.

Q.—If you make opium unavailable, except at great risk say, if there is a risk of punishment, or if a man has to go a great distance to get opium, or if he has to incur great expense and delay in getting opium—all these things may act as a sort of check.

A.—Yes, they will act as a check, but they will equally encourage illicit opium to come nearer too.

Q.—Is it possible for foreign opium to come into the garden ?

A.—It is distinctly possible, but it is improbable.

Q.—Do you allow these men to come into your garden area?

A.—We have the right to turn them out.

Q.—Would you turn out a smuggler or a mahaldar who brings opium?

A.—Yes, we would certainly turn him out

No 13

The Committee next examined—

(i) RAMA PRASAD AGARWALLA

(ii) RAI BAHADUR A. C AGARWALLA

(iii) CHANDRA NATH SARMA

SRIJUT CHANDRA NATH SARMA submitted a written statement which was read out by the Chairman.

RAI BAHADUR A C AGARWALLA —I would like to add that all possib[illegible]ken to stop opium smoking which is [illegible] now I know there is a law against it, but that law is a dead letter and very few cases of opium smoking are punished

CHAIRMAN —Do you know of such cases from personal knowledge?

A —Yes

Q —Have you ever helped by giving information to the Excise Superintendent?

A.—No, I have not But I suggest that there should be a vigilance committee which should have power to report such cases

Q —In other districts of Assam, we have heard very little of opium smoking?

A —May be, but if careful enquiries are made, it will be found that the habit is still going on in other parts also.

MR DAWSON —I am surprised, Rai Bahadur, that being a retired Superintendent of Police and knowing [illegible] there [illegible] law against it, you have not materially helped [illegible] mation to the Excise staff.

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA :—There are lots of difficulties such as having to go over to the Court for giving evidence and so on. That is why I suggest that there should be a vigilance committee.

CHAIRMAN :—It is only by co-operation of the public and the Excise staff that these things could be eradicated. I' is not the fault of Government, because there is already a law and the Government is entitled to look to the public for co operation in the application of the law. So it would be bette if influential and educated people like you always helped th staff with information in such matters.

A.—Yes, I see that it is the fault of the people.

CHAIRMAN :—Well, let me come to opium smugglin; *Do you admit that there* is smuggled opium coming into tl province ?

A.—Yes.

In one case, last year, one Atul Babu, a *Bengali* gentlem: got a license for an opium shop. He got one V. P. recei] but the Postmaster suspected that the parcel contain opium. He informed the authorities, but then the man did n come to take delivery of the parcel. Afterwards it was fou: to be a parcel containing foreign opium. Some enquiry w made and as a result he was not given a shop afterwards; was given to some one else.

Q—Was it addressed to him ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—About how much opium did it contain ?

A.—About three seers.

Q.—Where did it come from ?

A.—From the Calcutta side. I think, the Excise depa ment would be able to give more information about the ca I know that the license was cancelled.

Q —Are you in a position to say whether he was real implicated in the smuggling ?

A.—All I can say with regard to the case is that the matt ended there.

Q.—Is that the only case ?

A.—That is one of the instances. Of course, we have g hearsay information of many others. This Atul Babu's case is not a hearsay one.

Q.—You have no other case besides what the Excise officers speak of?

A.—No.

Q.—Then it is on this information that you base your opinion that there must be a good amount of smuggled opium coming into the district?

A.—Yes

Q.—Then, don't you think that there will be a greater amount of smuggled opium coming into the province if this policy is continued?

A.—If opium is issued in tablet form by Government and sold through post offices or dispensaries or through paid Government servants, then this will prevent shortweight, adulteration and smuggling of opium to a great extent.

Q.—Do you realise that after five years no more opium will be issued to persons below 50 years of age if this policy is continued?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What will the people below 50 years of age do who would not get opium? Would they not get from smugglers?

A.—If they knew that opium cannot be had from any place they would try to give up the habit.

Q.—But they might also try to get more smugglers in?

A.—I think that these smugglers generally sell in lump quantities. Their object is to try to dispose of the drug as quickly as possible. They do not give opium to consumers in retail.

Q.—According to your information, there is no retail sale of smuggled opium and smugglers do not directly deal with consumers?

A.—That is so.

Q.—There was a statement made before us at Jorhat by the Excise Superintendent who was in Behali that the smugglers were dealing with consumers individually and selling opium at retail prices. Would you take that statement to be correct?

A.—Probably they might be selling to some agents who sell opium to unregistered consumers. But I [illegible] that a smuggler would sell opium to each [illegible]

consumer. It is likely that he might give it to some friend or known person who is in his confidence, and that person in turn may go and sell to unregistered consumers and also in some cases to some registered persons whose rations are considered to be small.

Q.—Is it your opinion that if smugglers deal with consumers directly, there would be a large number of people who would stop them.

A.—Yes, that is the risk.

Q.—Would you say that since they have become very clever it is becoming very difficult to the Excise staff to detect them.

A.—Detection is of course a difficult job because smugglers take all precautions possible.

Q.—They might be selling opium directly to consumers, and it may have been difficult to detect them.

A.—My information is that smugglers send the opium to their agents or to their tried friends.

Q.—Do you suspect that they give their opium to mahal dars ?

A.—I quoted one case just now.

Q.—In that case ?

A.—There is one case of a Marwari—Seraram Mali.

Q.—In reply to question No. 4, with regard to savings by shortweight, you say—"It is generally sold to unregistered consumers—old ones and new converts". Do you think these mahaldars are trying to convert men to the habit.

CHANDRA NATH SARMA:—No they do not convert, but they help in this way by selling the surplus opium saved by shortweight they give encouragement to addicts; but directly they do not tempt.

Q.—It comes to this, that the addicts ask their friends to go and take opium.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you information of such cases, and have you particular knowledge of any person who has been converted newly by such a method ?

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA.—It is generally done in smoking. When people gather together for smoking, they take a greater quantity also. Of all the ways in which opium can be used smoking is the most objectionable.

Q.—That is admitted. But whether it is true or not is what we want to be sure about. Could you help us?

A.—I speak on very reliable information. Certain information I got from some of my relations, but I cannot give their names. I may say that one of my relations is an addict to smoking.

Q.—Would you secretly give information to the Excise staff of these names, and also advise your relative to give up the habit?

A.—I know he is addicted to smoking, and I cannot disbelieve him.

Q.—Why not tell him that if he be found out, he would be prosecuted and put into jail.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—

Q.—You can easily understand that if you had helped the Excise staff, it would not be a difficult job to suppress opium smoking.

A.—It can be stopped if vigorous steps be taken.

CHAIRMAN.—And also if you desire to help?

A.—You mean to say, the public? Yes.

Q.—You should give information whenever you come to know of such instances.

A.—That is why I advocate a village vigilance committee.

Q.—Even without having all that paraphernalia, you can do that. There is not a single person in Assam who would defend opium smoking. If you only give information of cases that come to your knowledge, it would be a lot of help.

A.—In spite of the attempts made by Government, there have been new consumers during these five years.

Q.—Although the Government help us, we do not like to help ourselves?

A.—Smoking is going on secretly of course.

Q.—It cannot be so secretly done that nobody knows and those who know it should come forward and give evidence.

A.—But people want to avoid the botheration of coming to Court. The villagers generally try to avoid coming to Court.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—Do you mean to suggest that people are indifferent ?

A.—People want to eradicate it but they want to avoid all consequent botheration and they do not want to come all the way to Tezpur to give evidence. It takes a long time in Court and there is no knowing whether the case will not be adjourned constantly.

Q.—You agree that it is an undesirable habit ?

A.—Of course I do ; I am telling you the fact that I know of.

Q.—That is why you propose to have a village vigilance committee ?

A.—Yes, they should be given powers to report and investigate cases of smoking.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—There is no doubt that people should change their mentality. What is your opinion—is smuggling on the increase or is it on the decrease ? I may tell you there was smuggling before the introduction of this policy, and I want to know whether it has now increased or decreased since the introduction of this policy ?

A.—It is very difficult to answer this question. Only we can say that smuggled opium is brought by Nepalis and Marwaris. The Marwaris are hard hit during these days, and if they can sell opium secretly, they can make some money.

Q.—Has the field enlarged for smuggling ?

A.—I do not think it has enlarged.

CHAIRMAN :—Do you mean to say that it has not increased on account of the fact that a new thing has been added, *viz.*, the risk of arrest ?

A.—Smuggling has not increased and that is one of the causes.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—Naturally it may be the other way. Formerly there was no restriction but now on account of the prohibition opium has been restricted and demand for it has become greater. Therefore there should be a much wider field for smuggling now ?

A.—Even in the nineties, from my personal knowledge I I can say, there were cases of opium smuggling detected. In those cases, opium was brought from Chittagong by Muhammadans. I know of one case where 10 seers were brought. They tried to take opium to Burma through Assam ; opium was not intended for consumption in Assam.

Q.—What you suggest is not quite logical You say, smuggling is not on the increase. You can easily understand that the cut has strictly reduced the rations, and therefore, there must be greater demand for opium, and smuggling ought to be on the increase ?

A.—With the decrease of opium-eaters, the demand cannot be greater

Q.—Still you admit there is a large number of unregistered consumers ?

A.—Roughly speaking that may be, and in a locality, with 100 consumers there may be 25 per cent unregistered cases. I make this calculation in the Biswanath Gyhat village. We made out a list and found that 25 per cent were unregistered consumers in the case of one village. Only a few days ago we ascertained the fact

Q.—Are they old addicts, or they took to it recently ?

A.—Old addicts as well as new consumers.

Q.—Who are in a majority ?

A.—Old addicts Some are so-called gentlemen and they feel ashamed to take passes. There are some ladies also who do not like to take passes out of shame and they have to purchase surplus opium from the mahaldar at high rates

Q.—Do you think these people would be able to give up the habit ?

A.—Why not ? If there be determination to give up ; I think they can give it up. Of course in the case of old persons, they may not be able to give up the habit. I had a servant with me who was an old habitual opium-eater when I was at Silchar. I tried to cure him of the habit and I was successful. He gave up the habit altogether. He was an old addict and I was pleased to find him now improved in health and looking stronger.

Q.—How many years ago was this ?

A.—It was in 1916.

Q.—And he has not taken to it ?

A.—No.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—What do you propose to do with those unregistered consumers ? Would you like that they should be given passes ?

A.—In the case of old men over 50, they may be given a chance to take passes within a certain time But in the case of young persons below 50 who can work well, they should not be given passes.

MR. ROFFEY :—What about those old people who are ashamed to come and ask for a pass ?

A.—All that we can do is that we can notify that this will be the last chance and no further chance will be given.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—Do you know it for a fact that Government did notify like that in 1929.

A.—That was the first attempt of the kind, and I think they may be given another chance.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—There was one attempt in 1925.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—You mean to say that there is no harm in giving one more chance ?

A.—Yes.

MR. DAWSON —Including the so called gentlemen ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—What should be the period by which time they should come in ?

A.—It may be notified that within three months from the date or at the most six months, they should come and register.

Q.—Would you put it at one year ?

A.—That is too long a time.

Q.—Do you think that persons below 50 do not require opium.

A.—I think they can give it up. Perhaps there may be some sick persons under 50 who on account of some particular sickness may require opium on grounds of health.

Q.—Don't you think that such cases can be treated in hospitals ?

A.—So far so good if that can be done. But there are some mufassil stations where there are no facilities for hospital treatment, and there will be no relief for them. In such cases, if found, they may be given temporarily on medical certificates until they are cured.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN.—If the cut is continued, do you believe that they would get habituated to this reduction and that they would rest satisfied, or do you think that they would crave for more ?

A.—Opium-eaters will never be satisfied with anything. There are some opium-eaters waiting outside and when they appear before you, they will perhaps clamour for all sorts of things. If you want to give them according to their wishes, there will be no use for this policy.

Q.—That is not my question. I want to know whether they would rest satisfied with the reduced ration, or would they get their ration supplemented?

A.—There is no possibility ordinarily. In some cases I have heard that some opium-eaters have got more than what they actually require. Such opium-eaters sell the surplus to other opium-eaters who require a little more. I know of a Brahmin widow of my own native village. She actually requires one tola, but she had a pass for two tolas. She sells the surplus to other persons.

Q.—What is her age?

A.—Over 50.

SRIJUT CHANDRA NATH SARMA :—I know of an opium-eater who is here outside. He used to take a lot of opium, nearly 15 tolas a month. He is now content with three tolas. His name is Lalu.

CHAIRMAN :—Will you please call him in. We would like to see him.

(Lalu, a veteran opium-eater then was brought in.)

LALU :—Before the pass system was introduced, I used to consume 15 tolas a month, but when the pass was first issued I was given only 4 tolas. I now get 3½ tolas. My age is given in the pass as 62.

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA —This man has got three sons and his main profession is cultivation; he also sells firewood.

LALU :—I have not taken recourse to any illicit means to procure more opium.

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA :—So you see, we have produced one confirmed addict before you to show that this opium habit could be reduced. It is a typical case. He was taking 15 tolas of opium and now he takes over 3½ tolas.

Q.—Do you think that paid servants can sell opium. Supposing we have Government servants and make the post pensionable.

A.—The post need not be pensionable. They should be appointed only for a period.

Q.—What would you pay them?

A.—I think Rs. 40 would do.

Q.—Do you honestly believe that this system would be better than the present mahaldari system.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—Why should a Government servan on Rs. 40 be more honest than an Assamese coming of a good family ?

A.—I say in this way that if opium be issued in pill form o tablet form with certain Government mark there will be no chance of short weight and adulteration, because mahaldars make profit by selling short weight and by adulteration and such chances will disappear.

Q.—With tablets would not the present mahaldar if we had exactly the same form of tablets be as honest as the Government servants whom you are suggesting ?

A.—These mahaldars are generally taken from a class who, I do not think, are honest persons.

MR. DAWSON—Don't you believe that some of them, on account of their respectability and of belonging to old families, could be relied upon ? Supposing you have to continue the present cut without opium in tablets. Do you think that Government servants on Rs. 40 would be more honest than mahaldars ?

A.—In that case, I do not consider there is any advantage.

MR. ROFFEY :—During the last four years the reduction in this district in the issue of opium has amounted to 654 seers. Can you tell me if that 654 seers has been supplied to registered pass-holders and non-pass-holders from other sources. Has it been made up from outside or in some other manner ? You see that this is a very large reduction.

A.—I do not think that the whole amount has been suppli There may be some portion. That's all.

MR. DAWSON :—We in this Committee are faced with t difficulty about smuggling. There are some cases of detecti and the quantity seized is very small and the question which are putting to ourselves is how much smuggled opium com from outside. You have great experience as a Superintende of Police. Could you help us ?

A.—My information is that some Marwaries and some tim some Nepalies bring foreign opium into this district. As regar the quantity I cannot give any correct information.

Q.—You find it as difficult as we do to make even a guess.

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the probabilities compared with the amou seized ?

A.—It is not possible to answer that question.

Q.—You could not say ?

A.—I am sorry I cannot say.

CHAIRMAN.—Do you think that the vigilance of the police and the Excise staff five years ago was as good as it is now?

A.—Since the creation of a separate excise staff the police did not consider that detection of cases under the excise laws was an important part of their duty. Formerly when I was first appointed to the Police Department, the Excise Department was under the Inspector General of Police, and police officers used to take all possible care and paid due attention to the detection of excise and opium cases But since the creation of a separate excise staff, the police do not consider it as a part of their important duties and they are not keen on these detections.

Q.—In your opinion there is greater vigilance than there used to be now that a special staff has been appointed.

A.—I think so. Now with a separate department there ought to be a greater vigilance.

Q.—You say that the price of smuggled opium is less than that of surplus opium.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Will you be able to say whether the price is less or more than that of the treasury opium?

A.—I may tell you that surplus opium is perhaps selling at Rs. 4 to Rs. 8.

Q.—What is the price of smuggled opium?

A.—Rupees 4 usually.

Q.—That is certainly higher than the present price of the treasury opium?

A.—Yes, higher.

Q.—If there be an abundance of smuggled opium then the unregistered consumers or those who take opium without passes would not have gone to purchase surplus opium at a higher price, is that not a fact?

A.—Quite so.

Q.—That means that consumers do not get sufficient quantity of smuggled opium?

A.—No.

Q.—That is why they go for surplus opium?

A.—Quite so.

Q.—According to your calculation, out of 100 registered consumers, 25 are unregistered.

A.—Yes that is at Biswanath.

Q.—Is not Biswanath in Behali ?

A.—Yes, but the thana is Sutia.

Q.—In Behali there are 2,000 registered consumers and according to your calculations, there will be 750 unregistered consumers.

A.—That may be. We calculated only in a particular village so it is difficult to say whether that proportion will apply to all villages.

Q.—Do you think, all these 25 per cent. of consumers are really opium consumers ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do they not take it for traffic ?

A.—I know only that they are unregistered consumers.

Q.—Are there young people among them ?

A.—There may be. We would say only from guess. It is difficult to gauge the age of a consumer.

Q.—How do you suggest it can be stopped, supposing Government could not supply tablet or packet forms ?

A.—In that case, it would be difficult to prevent short-weight sales.

Q.—Can you give any suggestion at the present stage ?

A.—We are against the present mahaldari system because we have heard many things against the present system.

Q.—You decry the present system. Can you now substitute it by a better one ?

A.—We suggest the pill form or the packet system.

Q.—Except the pill system, have you any other suggestion ?

A.—Practically now they do not get any profit. They get, I think, about Rs. 20 or so. If they get a larger margin that may improve the position.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—In your opinion, the cut should be continued ?

A.—Yes, as regard all consumers below 50.

Q.—For the remaining 5 years ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—At the rate of 10 per cent. ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know that it has caused a great hardship?

A.—In exceptional cases, where the consumer feels great hardship, in that case, the Collector may make some sort of examination by medical officers, but the policy should be allowed to continue, because after five years we hope to see a satisfactory improvement as regards the consumption of opium.

Q.—Am I to understand from you that the Collector should have power to revise the quota of registered passes?

A.—No I would give the power in exceptional cases.

Q.—Do you suggest that a small committee should be appointed to help him? Supposing a man from Biswanath ghat applies to the Deputy Commissioner, saying that his quota is not adequate and that he wants the quota he was getting five years before, who will decide whether he should be given more? Will the Deputy Commissioner keep it until he goes there next time on his tour, or would it be better to form a small local committee to report on that without consulting the Civil Surgeon?

A.—Village committees may be formed with the gaonburas or mauzadars.

Q.—I do not want to include mauzadars.

A.—Well then there may be some leading men of the village. That committee should also be a vigilant committee and should have power to report breaches.

Q.—You are also of the opinion that Government should open the registers now with a time-limit asking applications from opium consumers, that they should apply or appear before the Deputy Commissioner, so that their names could be enlisted now, once for all, to get their quota for their life time?

A.—As regards 50 years or above I advise this; but as regards persons who are below 50, no pass should be given as a rule. Of course, in exceptional cases on medical certificate given by a competent authority, that could be considered.

Q.—By bringing these unregistered consumers into the book, will it not relieve them from hardship as they are now paying exorbitant rates in buying their requirements?

A.—Certainly, because in some cases, they have to pay even Rs. 8 per tola to the mahaldar.

Q.—Do you think that confirmed addicts cannot reduce the quantity they consume every day?

A.—We have produced before you one confirmed addict just now; he gave his evidence and you have yourselves asked him. That shows that rations can be brought down.

Mr. DAWSON :—Mr. Chairman, I was just questioning the old man outside, and he tells me that when he took 15 tolas he was a young man, brisk and more vigorous; but that now he is an old man and he wants less.

Q.—Do you think by forming temperance association it will do induce the public to give up this habit?

A.—These addicts are not amenable to request, and it is very difficult to induce them to give up the habit by sweet words or preaching.

Mr. DAWSON:—

Q.—Were you here during the Non-co-operation days in 1921?

A.—I was Superintendent of Police in Gauhati.

Q.—In your experience some people certainly give up the habit?

A.—But afterwards they took to it.

Q.—That is exactly what I wanted to know. How far did they give it up, and how far did they come back to the habit?

A.—The first thing is that the Kamrup district is not so bad as regards opium consumption as the upper districts. In Goalpara and Kamrup, we have got less number of opium-eaters. Nowgong is notorious. Some people gave it up, but I think about 25 out of 100 went back to the habit.

Examined by Maulavi ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Do you take a very keen interest in the matter?

A.—During my service, I had no occasion to trouble about these matters. I retired in 1930, and since then, I am living a retired life. I am taking rest and enjoying my pension. I am working now as an Honorary Magistrate. I am a member of the Local Board and a member of some of the committees here.

Q.—That means you do not take so much interest?

A.—I am not a public man.

Q.—(to Chandra Nath Sarma)—Do you take much interest in these matters.

Srijut CHANDRA NATH SARMA :—Yes, whenever I find opportunity, I tell to the people not to take opium.

Srijut RAMA PRASAD AGARWALLA :—I also take great interest in these matters.

Mr. DAWSON :—We have heard repeatedly that the man who takes opium is looked down upon with contempt. Is that putting it too strongly?

A—An opium-eater is looked down upon certainly. No body believes a *kania* (opium-eater) and he is considered a contemptible person.

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA:—When I was a little boy, I remember that *kanias* were considered as honourable persons, because I have seen that in certain places it was considered a privilege to give girls in marriage to *kanias*, but those days are gone and times are changed. This is a time when opium-eaters are looked down upon with contempt by every body. Things were quite different in my younger days and opium consumers used to take it in public and offer it openly to all visitors. That state of things has disappeared and the opium-eater is gradually losing his place in society. Even the priests who were originally taking it have now ordered their disciples to give up the habit. That is a good sign of the times.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—Do you know of anyone that smokes opium?

RAMA PRASAD AGARWALLA:—I have known cases of opium smoking in my village Biswanath, but I have not reported them. If it is ordered I can report.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

SRIJUT CHANDRA NATH SARMA:—There has been a good deal of temperance movement in 1930, and many people have given up opium.

Q.—You are a Satradhikar of the Nikamul Satra? You took a great part and asked people not to take opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There is a very considerable public opinion against it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—A lot of confirmed addicts have been compelled to give it up.

A.—They have reduced their ration due to economic depression as they could not pay for it.

Q.—You work among them?

A.—Yes, when I go into the village.

Q.—People also desire to give it up?

A.—They have often expressed their desire to give it up. They now repent having taken to it at all.

Q.—If opium is made unavailable, are you sure they will give it up.

RAI BAHADUR A. C. AGARWALLA:—Y[illegible] but [illegible] want a substitute.

RAMA PRASAD AGARWALLA :—If it is made unavailable they will cease to take it.

Q.—Would they not go to smugglers to take opium?

A.—Smuggling should be stopped.

Q.—Do you believe that the special staff have been doing this work?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are a jail visitor?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that persons in the jail can get opium smuggled into the jail?

A.—No. I have met a lot of men who have been convicted and who are opium-eaters. There was a case of a man who was convicted for six months; he did not take opium in the jail; he came out and he gave up the habit ever since. He told me that he thanked his stars because his jail life was beneficial and helped him in stopping the habit.

MR. ROFFEY :—Has he been cured?

A.—He is now dead.

Q.—For not taking opium?

A.—No, he lived for about 4 or 5 years afterwards.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—We heard some suggestion at Nowgong that if you take advantage of the present economic situation and immediately stop opium amongst people under 45 or 40, it would be a good to the country. Do you agree?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you agree that it should be stopped at once?

A.—Yes, I agree to stop it at once if possible.

Q.—If it is not possible?

A.—I approve of the continuance of this policy.

Q.—The presence of 25 per cent. of unregistered consumers is an extreme case in Biswanath?

A.—Yes, it is not so in all villages. They are all *Kaibartas* (fisher caste).

CHAIRMAN :—Are they more addicted to opium than any other caste?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—They are actually fishermen?

A.—Yes. They have to work at night.

The Committee adjourned till next day.

No. 14. *Saturday the 8th July 1933.*

The Committee then examined MR. C. HEARN, Bhorbheel T. E.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—What is the total population of your tea estate?

A.—The total population is 1,400. Out of them 1,000 are adult working population. There are 118 opium-eaters.

Q.—Have all of them got passes?

A.—Forty-six have got original passes, that is to say they took passes when the scheme was first inaugurated; 19 have recently got new licences, 23 have applied for licences and the necessary medical certificates had been produced but they have not received the passes yet.

Q.—When were they applied for?

A.—I cannot give the date, it may be a fortnight ago. Then there are 30 more left and these I suspect take opium without passes.

Examined by Mr. DAWSON:—

Q.—Do you know if most of these opium-eaters came up from their country with this opium habit?

A.—I should say, when these people came up—the majority of the opium consumers are Cuttack Uriyas—the number of opium-eaters was negligible, possibly two or three. They Ha acquired the habit on the garden since they arrived.

Q.—Do you still recruit from Orissa or Cuttack?

A.—No. In recent years we sent down a few Sardars for recruiting but without any success.

Q.—Do you try to prevent opium-eaters from coming up to the garden from the recruiting country?

A.—The question has not arisen bacause we have been receiving no recruits.

Q.—The reason why I ask that question is this. Last night I was talking to my brother who said that in the recruiting instructions which were sent down to the recruiting agents by his garden there is a provision that no opium-eaters should be sent up.

A.—Such instructions are not incorporated with regard to recruitment in my garden.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—How did they contract the habit, from the *bustee wallas* (villagers) or from the garden coolies?

A.—That is difficult to say. They may have contracted the habit from the one or two that originally came up to the garden.

Q.—You have no reason to suppose that the coolies contracted the habit from the Assamese people living nearby ?

A.—I have no reason to presume that.

Q.—Then they may have learnt from the one or two coolies that were addicts before that ?

A.—I say that is in all probability true.

Q.—Do you think these people can give up the habit ?

A.—I have one case of a boy that was a big opium-eater of the age of about 18. He was ill and in the opinion of the medical officer it was considered that he should give up the habit. He was kept in hospital and all supplies of opium were prevented from reaching him. He was gaven other drugs which I do not know about, not being a doctor, and which prevented him from feeling very ill. Eventually the boy gave up the habit altogether. But he resumed the habit again after a period of two years. His friends induced him to take to the habit again. That is the only case I know of.

Q.—Do you desire that these people who take opium without passes should be given passes now ?

A.—If you are going to stamp out contraband opium it is essential that confirmed opium-eaters should be given passes.

CHAIRMAN :—Do you suspect that any contraband opium meaning foreign opium which is not treasury opium, is coming into the garden ?

A.—I suspect very strongly, yes.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—

Q.—Have you any reasons for the suspicion ?

A.—In the course of the last three years I have been able through company servants to help the Excise Officer in apprehending people with opium on them and there have been one or two cases run in Tezpur.

Examined by MR. ROFFEY :—

Q.—How long have you been in Borbheel ?

A.—Ten years.

Q.—These 118 cases that you mentioned are they all addicts?

A.—Yes.

CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You do not mean that the 30 whom you suspect to be getting opium from elsewhere are also addicts ?

A.—I also suspect that they have all been addicts to the habit.

MR. ROFFEY :—

Q.—Why do you suspect them ? Don't you know they eat opium ?

A.—I have no positive proof except that I have been told by other opium-eaters.

Q.—Are these 30 cases all coolies of your garden ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you have not applied for passes on their behalf ?

A.—I took it to be a new scheme for issuing passes.

Q.—What do you mean by new scheme ?

A.—I understand that in recent years free passes were issued by Government and since I have known about them I have told [illegible] that if they are opium eaters they must come for- [illegible] passes.

Q.—[illegible] say that you have applied for passes for 23 and 30 are unregistered. That makes the total 53 without passes now ?

A.—Yes at the moment.

Q.—Where do they get their opium from ?

A.—They get it chiefly, I suspect, from the Nepalese living roundabout.

Q.—Have you ever asked them where they got it from ? How far away is the nearest opium shop ?

A.—Roughly about 3 miles.

Q.—Do you know or suspect that some of these 53 men are getting opium from this opium shop ?

A.—No. I do not suspect that they do. Not directly certainly.

Q.—What do you mean by directly ?

A.—It is only suspicion of course. But I think it would be possible that an opium seller might give shortweight, collect the surplus and dispose of it possibly to one or two people who would in their turn redispose of it to coolies in the lines.

Q.—You do not suspect that particular vendor ?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you heard of any rumours

A.—Rumours, Yes.

Q.--I can tell you that the evidence received upto date a sorhat, Dibrugarh and Nowgong is that shortweight sale is univer-al. You do not agree with that ?

A.—I have no data to go on. I have only heard about it, only rumours.

Q.—You say that these 53 opium-eaters get their supply rom the Nepalese ?

A.—Yes, indirectly.

Q.—From outside the garden ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you like to see opium eating given up ?

A.—I should.

Q.—You know of the present policy of Government, namely the 10 per cent. cut policy ?

A.—Yes, gradually decreasing the rations.

Q.—Up to date the scheme has been carried out for 5 years which means that 50 per cent. of the issue of treasury opium since 1928 when the policy began has been actually cut. Would you agree to the continuance of this cut for another 5 years ?

A.—I should suggest the continue being discontinued for a period and resume again later on. In that connection, I know one or two cases where an opium-eater is getting his supply from the Government shop and is supplementing it from contraband sources.

Q.—How would that affect the Government policy if the Government policy was continued for another five years and the whole of the issue of treasury opium stopped so that no one could get any treasury opium at all ?

A.—I think the cut is too rapid. It has encouraged contraband opium to a very lage extent and, as I have said it affects more particularly the cooly who pays, I believe, Rs. 2 a tola for the treasury opium because for his contraband opium he pays anything from Rs. 4 to Rs. 6. Secondly, as a consequence his wife and children suffer.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI—:

Q.—When did you make this enquiry about opium ?

A.—It is not an enquiry conducted on one day. It is the gradual accumulation of knowledge. I enquired frome tim to time since I have taken an interest from last year.

Q.—What was the special occasion for you to enquire from last year ?

A.—Since I became the Manager of the garden I have taken more interest naturally.

Q.—Were you not a Manager for the last 10 years ?

A.—I have only been Manager about 18 months.

Q.—Since then you were taking interest ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Before that you had no idea ?

A.—Before that I had no particular knowledge

Q.—When did you first come to know of these 53 persons who were opium-eaters ?

A.—That enquiry was conducted partly by myself and partly by my staff

Q.—When ?

A.—During the last fortnight.

Q.—Did you question any of the coolies whether he got his supply of opium from the Nepalese or from the shops ?

A.—I have asked questions but I have received no satisfactory reply.

Q.—You asked all these 53 men ?

A.—No. When I met them on their work I questioned them on the subject; but naturally it is very difficult to elicit any satisfactory reply.

Q.—What led you to think that they got the supply from the Nepalese ?

A.—Because in the cases which I mentioned previously the persons arrested by the excise staff were all Nepalese.

Q.—Have you any idea of the Behali opium shop ?

A.—No

Q.—Did you ever enquire of the excise staff whether the lessee sold the surplus opium to these unregistered consumers ?

A.—No, I have never enquired.

Q.—You say that this cut is too rapid ?

A.—In my opinion it is too rapid, I think so.

Q.—Will you let me know what will be a reasonable cut ?

A.—The reasonable cut is I consider 3 per cent the rest of the period.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI.—

Q.—Do you mean that in all cases of all ages?
A.—Yes it should apply to all ages.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—
Q.—According to your opinion it is a bad habit?
A.—I consider it is an evil habit.

Q.—You consider that it should go?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you consider also that there should be a 3 per cent. cut?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What other proposals do you wish to advance to check this contraband opium?

A.—I have one suggestion and it is this. Government opium should be issued in pill form wherever possible so that you could tell at a glance which is Government and which is contraband opium. Whether it is possible or not I do not know. But I think it could be made up into a packet with a Government stamp. Also that would possibly help to checkmate the opium seller in the Government shop from giving shortweight and making a profit on it. If the consumer knows that he gets so many tablets for a rupee this difficulty of shortweight could be met.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You say that would help in checking smuggling?

A.—Yes because contraband opium would be recognisable at a glance.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—Then you say the excise staff would be able to recognise it?

A.—Yes and also the Manager of the garden.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—But even now I think there are tests by which the excise officer can say whether it is smuggled opium?

A.—But to the inexperienced men it is not possible. I do not think I can tell. All opium looks alike to me.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—
Q.—Any more suggestions?
A.—I have one suggestion if I may put it forward for an effective way of cutting down the amount and that is this. The opium that is sold in the Government shops might be in tablet

form which would be made up of a certain percentage of opium only and adulterated for the remaining Rather than giving them a smaller quantity of pure opium you might adulterate it in larger proportions gradually in these tablets so that no one can say if it is opium or anything else mixed As years ago on these tablets would possibly contain nothing but say sugar The amount should be reduced so gradually and adulterated so that it would be imperceptible

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI —That is an idea but that would lead to people never taking opium from Government at all

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI —What do you think of the price ? Do you think it sufficient now or do you think that it should be increased ?

A —I should suggest that it should be kept at the present figure.

Q —Why ?

A —The present price is Rs 2 There is a very large difference between that and the price they have to pay to contraband sellers that is Rs 4 to Rs. 6 If the treasury price is further enhanced then it would be more difficult to get the men in the garden to take passes The difference would be very small And they can get the supply from the smugglers without the need to take passes

Q —Supposing you raise to Rs 2 8 ?

A —I should have no objection

MR E S ROFFEY —

Q —Can you tell us anything about the opium-eaters on the gardens in the Behali district ?

A —I am afraid I have no information as to that I know there are opium eaters but I am afraid I have no information

MR DAWSON —

Q —You do not know about Kettela garden which is next-door ?

A —Barring the fact that there are opium eaters, I know nothing further

MR E S ROFFEY —

Q —Have you discussed the question with the surrounding garden Managers ?

A —Yes

Q.—Can you say whether their views are generally the same as yours?

A.—Certainly the views I submitted for issuing licences are the same as mine.

Q.—More particularly with regard to the Government policy?

A.—Yes. I spoke to one or two people about it the other day. They quite agreed that the Government policy should be continued.

Q.—You say that the cut should be a smaller one?

A.—Yes

Q.—Do they think with you there?

A.—I did not discuss the question of cut with them. That is my personal opinion. But we discussed the Government policy of cutting down generally.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You cannot say the neighbouring people agreed to the present cut?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you reported to the Deputy Commissioner, or to the Excise Superintendent, that you have 30 unregistered opium-eaters in your garden before filing applications for passes for 23?

A.—I have been a Manager only recently.

Q.—Do the Excise officers visit your garden occasionally?

A.—I personally have not seen the excise officers for some considerable time.

Q—Even this fact was not also reported to the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—Nothing has been reported to the Deputy Commissioner except that licences have been applied for. I think I applied for 42 passes in all. Twenty-three for whom I have applied for passes and 19 who have, I think, recently been supplied.

Q.—Excluding all these you have still 30 according to your figures?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you not reported to the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—I have not made any official report.

Q.—Do you think that any hardship has been caused to their families on account of the very large price they are paying for opium?

A.—I certainly consider that they are hard hit especially now when the wages are low.

Q.—Do you wish that they should be registered so as to save them from ruin as their income is not sufficient to meet their demand?

A.—That is one of my reasons.

Q.—Is this the principal reason in the interests of the labour force?

A.—This is one of the principal reasons. The other reason is of course to help the Government.

CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—To help the Government in what way?

A.—By giving them revenue. It would enhance their revenue if the unregistered consumers take opium from Government.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—Can you say if the Deputy Commissioner visited your garden?

A.—Yes, during the cold weather.

Q.—Have you reported to him that you have a large number of opium-eaters?

A.—There was no report in writing on the subject.

Q.—Have you mentioned to him in the course of discussions?

A.—We discussed the subject, I can remember, of licences. But I do not remember to have discussed the subject of illicit opium.

Q.—I think you have a Resident Medical Officer with European qualifications?

A.—I have one but he does not reside in the garden.

Q.—Have you any visiting Medical Officer with European qualifications?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you consulted at any time with your Medical Officer as regards the opium eating coolies of your garden?

A.—I have not consulted him on the matter of cure. But the only consultation I had with him on the subject was that he was rather averse to signing the necessary declaration forms that these coolies should have opium. He asked me if I considered it was necessary and I said it was necessary. That is all the consultation I had with him on the subject.

Q.—Can you tell me why he hesitated to sign to recommend passes to the needy persons?

A.—I am unable to say. I think it was the large number—it was 23 on that date and he thought it was a large number. Barring that I am unable to give any other reason.

Q.—So no attempt was made in your garden by the Medical officer to cure them of this habit ?

A.—No efforts have been made to cure them of the habit, barring that one case that I cited just now.

Q.—What is your knowledge about the work of these opium eaters. Do they work as well as those who get their quota in right time ?

A.—If they did not get their quota they become ill and are not able to work until such time as they can get their opium.

Q.—Surely it is a loss to the garden to some extent ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know the Government policy which is to cut the rations each year by 10 per cent. so that at the end of ten years there will no more opium except to those over 50 years. The policy has now run for five years and there are five more years left. Are you in favour of continuing the policy ?

A.—I think I have said that I was in favour of a three per cent. reduction instead of the ten per cent. that is now prescribed. That is my personal opinion.

Q.—Do you know that those whose rations have so far been cut down to the extent of 50 per cent. are getting their supply from purchases from the mahaldars or the smugglers ?

A.—I have previously said that I have that information.

Q.—You have a large number of opium consumers in yo garden. And you realise that these men have to pay mo than double the treasury price for the illicit opium. Do you n consider that if they can get their opium from the treasur besides the gain to Government the coolies also would be ab to get their proper weight ?

A.—That is a question I should need notice of, I think.

Q.—What is your opinion ?

A.—I consider that it would be possible.

Q.—It would be beneficial in the interests of the opium eating labour force ?

A.—It would be beneficial.

Q.—From what place is opium smuggled into your garden ?

A.—Barring that I believe they get it from the villages. I cannot venture any further opinion.

Q.—Can you say whether that opium is treasury opium or contraband opium ?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you at any time examined the opium from any coolie ?

A.—I have examined contraband opium. This was a case which occurred some time ago when a Nepali was arrested with opium concealed in a cigarette tin.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Is it different from treasury opium ?

A.—I am unable to say.

Q.—What means do you suggest for the prevention of opium smuggling by the *bustee wallahs* ?

A.—I do not agree entirely that the opium is smuggled in always. I should say it is more a case of the coolies going out from the garden and purchasing it outside. In that way, I might say that it is not generally brought into the garden. It is only during the rains when they cannot get out that opium is brought in because the rivers are full and they are difficult to cross.

Q.—Do you think that the confirmed addicts cannot reduce their quota ?

A.—I would suggest the three per cent. to take the place of the present ten per cent. and provision being also made for vigorous measures to be taken against those that sell contraband opium.

Examined by MR. ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Did you explain to the coolies that opium eating is a bad habit ?

A.—I have often explained to them but it has had no effect.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Can you please tell me when these 53 coolies came to your garden ?

A.—These coolies chiefly come from the Cuttack areas almost without an exception. Cuttack area recruitment took place very largely in 1919. I am naturally unable to say whether all the 53 came up at that time.

Q.—Shall I be correct in saying that at any rate they came before 1925 ?

A.—Yes that is right.

Q.—You know that these passes were given from time to time since 1925. And in 1929 it was announced also that no more passes would be given after September 1929.

A.—I was not aware of that.

Q.—Were you not Manager at that time?

A.—No.

Q.—You cannot tell us whether these people were consumers at that time in 1929?

A.—I can state that a large number of them certainly were.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—You were on the garden as Assistant at that time.

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—When did the rest of them, the 46 people get their passes?

A.—*You mean those that have passes? New licences have* been only issued fairly recently, within the last few months.

Q.—I am speaking of the first lot?

A.—The original passes were 46 and they were taken when the passes were orginally issued.

Q.—In 1925?

A.—May be.

Q.—When were these 19 passes issued?

A.—I should say six to eight months ago. I think within the last eight months.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—There are no new comers among them?

A.—No new comers in the way of opium-eaters to the garden at all.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You cannot say whether these 19 as well as the 53 were opium consumers at that time?

A.—I should say that a number of them were.

Q.—Have you got information to that effect?

A.—I have information to that effect in that these people who recently took passes and their witnesses signed that they were taking opium for the last seven years.

Q.—They have to do something like that in order to get passes?

A.—That is all I have to go on?

Q —Actually the authorities or Government had no knowledge whether originally they were consumers at the time passes were issued?

A —No

Q —At that time you knew that passes had to be taken out and the Manager must have given that information?

A.—Yes, in 1925, I take it that the Manager did give that information.

Q —Do you think opium eaters of the garden have any particular objection to take passes?

A —In that respect they have no objection now at all.

Q.—If they know that passes would be issued they would be too glad to apply for them?

A —They are perfectly aware that passes would be issued

Q —They must have been aware in 1925?

A —They were undoubtedly aware of it

RAI B... NIL... D... —Is it not a fact that in th... cerned everything is done th...

MR DAWSON:—What is meant by saying that everything is done through the Manager's office?

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA —My point is that the coolies may not have been aware of it at the time. I will ask this question.

Is it the practice in your garden that all Government orders and circulars which the Government issue from time to time to the Gaonburas are sent through the Manager or without his knowledge?

A —They are addressed to the Managers

Q —Summonses are sent through the Managers and not directly to the garden coolies?

A.—I would put it like this ... dence from the Deputy Commissio... goes through the Manager.

Q —Is it a fact that no Government servant or peon with summons or warrant should enter into the garden without the permission of the Manager?

A.—I am not aware of any such order but they do come to the Manager first

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—If I say that these 72 persons (*viz.*, 118—46) acquired the habit since after the passes were originally issued in 1926, shall I be very wrong in saying that?

A.—As I say in 1925 I was not the Manager and I can give you no definite information on that. But at the same time all the coolies at the time were undoubtedly informed of it. Why any of them did not come and take the passes I cannot say.

Q.—Are you in a position to say whether these were addicts at the time?

A.—I am unable to say.

Q.—If these were actual consumers at the time, I must assume that the Manager must have informed them and they would have taken passes?

A.—I would not say that definitely because there might have been a feeling of shame to come out and take passes. You may assume that a few people that were opium-eaters did not come and take passes because they felt a sense of shame.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the majority of the opium consumers were ashamed to take out passes?

A.—Certainly some of them did feel like that presumably.

Q.—Do you consider that to be the cooly mentality?

A.—Not the majority certainly. I do not say that all the 72 were opium-eaters at the time. I cannot say that.

Q.—At the same time these people may have taken to the habit again. My object is this. I want to know whether it is not possible that a fresh lot may spring up and ask for passes saying that they were taking opium for the last five years?

A.—I should say yes, there is a possibility of that. And a definite limit should be put to the time within which passes should be issued.

Q.—You still want to give them one more final chance?

A.—As far as my people are concerned, I do say so.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Did I understand you to say that there were some opium-eaters in the garden?

A.—They acquired the habit from the one or two that originally came up in 1919.

Q—Would that not be an additional danger in registering them now? A little time after some more would acquire the habit and ask for passes?

A—I think certainly that genuine addicts do tempt others to take to the habit. But if you stop your contraband opium then the habit will not spread.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—If genuine addicts make converts and if new passes are issued from time to time then they would have to be registered also and there is no end?

A.—I should say such a thing is possible.

Q—What would be the sounder policy in the circumstances: do you want the policy of making opium more difficult to get or the policy of making opium more and more available as each set acquires the habit?

A.—I think the present policy of medical certificate and two witnesses meets the case very well

Q—So nobody should be given a pass?

A.—Unless he can produce a medical certificate and attest his application by two witnesses. There have been one or two cases where the coolies have come to me and asked for opium passes. I have sent them to the hospital and the doctor Babu who has been there for a long period immediately said that he was not an opium eater. I say that you can tell and the staff know who are the men that are addicts I think it is easy.

Q.—*Do you* depend on his fellow opium-eaters on that point?

A.—Apparently Government is satisfied. Personally if I had the means of knowing that he is bringing men who are perjuring themselves I would immediately take action.

CHAIRMAN—

Q—Might he not also get a pass to sell it to others?

A.—Certainly he might do so.

Q.—And also his fellow opium-eaters may be witnesses in order to procure him the pass?

A—I agree. But then you have the medical certificate. How far medical certificates can tell whether a man is an addict I cannot say.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You have suggested that the reduction should be at 3 per cent?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Even in that case there would be some contraband opium coming in?

A.—There would certainly be and there is now. But I think that this opium would not be so much in demand.

Q.—Do you think that if all restrictions are removed there would be no smuggling?

A.—It is difficult to say.

Q.—It is very difficult to say that the prevalence of smuggling is an outcome of this policy.

A.—I think smuggling would cease to be such a profitable business as it is at present. But I do not think it will stop it altogether. These people would carry on but without such profits.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—I think that one of the methods you have suggested with reference to the Government policy was to cry a halt?

A.—I have said a gradual halt.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—In the term contraband opium do you include opium that the mahaldar sells to the non-pass-holders?

A.—In all that I spoke now, actually I did not mean that. I meant foreign smuggled opium.

Q.—You said that you could not distinguish the treasury opium from the non-treasury opium?

A.—Yes. I could not.

Q.—Would it not be possible to come to the conclusion that opium which you thought to be contraband opium was really treasury opium?

A.—That is quite possible.

Q.—Therefore, it might be considered that there is not really any smuggled foreign opium?

A.—On these grounds, on that theory, you are quite correct.

Q.—Then the opium that is illicitly consumed by the coolies might be only treasury opium which was saved by the mahaldars from their short-weight sales?

A.—That might be so.

No. 15.

The Committee then examined—

(i) COLONEL W. D. RITCHIE, I.M.S., Chief Medical Officer, Empire Tea Company.

(ii) LIEUT.-COLONEL H. L. BATRA, I.M.S., Civil Surgeon, Darrang.

(iii) DR. J. HAY ARTHUR, P. O. Bindukuri.

CHAIRMAN.—Colonel Batra, I want to have your experience in the jails, regarding the sufferings of opium-eaters when addicts go into the prison, and do not get their opium.

A.—Those who are taking small quantities do not suffer much. But those who are addicts do suffer.

Q.—Do they get out of the habit?

A.—Yes, they do.

Q.—Have you seen any body who has given up the habit when in jail, but has, later on, gone back to it.

A.—As long as they are in the jail they continue without opium, but I do not know what happens outside the jail.

Q.—You consider that opium has an evil effect on the system of a man?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think it desirable to get out of the habit?

A.—It would be better because it affects the man mentally, morally and physically.

Q.—Do you consider he would die?

A.—No.

Q.—In the case of a man of the age of 50 and above, will he die if he is asked to give up the habit?

A.—Not likely.

COLONEL RITCHIE:—I know of men dying on account of forcible abstinence.

DR. J. HAY ARTHUR:—No man will die actually by stopping opium.

Q.—Do you think a man can be cured of the opium habit?

A.—Yes, as long as he is willing himself.

Q.—Have you heard of the Modino treatment?

A.—I have not tried it.

COLONEL BATRA :—The circular was recently received and I have not tried it yet.

COLONEL RITCHIE :—I have also not tried.

MR. DAWSON :—You heard what Colonel Batra has said as regards the jail experience. Do you agree with him?

COLONEL RITCHIE :—

A.—Yes.

Q.—If a man applies for an opium pass, will you find any difficulty in certifying that he was an opium-eater and requires a pass.

A.—We shall have to depend on his statement.

Q.—You could not tell it from his looks?

A.—Not if he is an opium-eater of an average quantity.

COLONEL BATRA :—It is impossible, if he is only taking a small quantity, to tell it from his looks. The ordinary dose is one or two tolas. It does not show any signs on the man, and it is difficult to distinguish him.

Q.—Were you in Jorhat in 1929?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You sat with the Deputy Commissioner on a committee for giving passes?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you find it impossible to say to your satisfaction that a particular man was an opium-eater?

A.—I found great difficulty.

Q.—You protested that you were finding it very difficult to say whether a man was an opium-eater or not?

A.—Yes, honestly. If he is a man that takes a moderate quantity, I could not tell.

COLONEL RITCHIE :—In 1929, when passes were freely issued and when the Civil Surgeon went round with the Deputy Commissioner, I was the acting Inspector General of Civil Hospitals, and Colonel James who was then Civil Surgeon, complained to the Deputy Commissioner, who at the time was Mr. Cosgrave, that he could not honestly give a certificate,

r. Cosgrave asked me about it and I entirely agreed with Colo- l James. He had also written to Mr. Dennehy about it and ntioned all this and protested that it was very difficult to spot opium-eater.

Q.—You belong to the Indian Medical Service?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have just retired?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I asked you if you could get some figures for the gardens ou are in charge of?

A.—I am in charge of the Empire Tea Company; I have ot figures. Out of an adult labour force 8,378 in nine gardens, have found that there are only 8 opium-eaters with passes, and here were no opium-eaters without passes.

Q.—Dr. Arthur, how many gardens have you in your charge?

Dr. Arthur.—Ten.

Q.—What is the total labour population on these gardens?

A.—Seven thousand six hundred and twenty adults.

Q.—How many opium-eaters?

A.—Twenty-two with passes.

Q.—How many without passes?

A.—None.

Q.—Do you give any drug to an opium-eater to relieve him of his sufferings when in prison?

COLONEL BATRA:—No. When a man has been taking a moderate ration, we do not give him any drug; but when he suffers very much, because he had been taking a large quantity, we give him a small quantity of opium not directly, but in some indirect form to relieve him for the time being.

Q.—What do you give him?

A.—Tincture of opium.

COLONEL RITCHIE:—But he will take to it again after his release. There is no doubt about it.

COLONEL BATRA.—I know of cases where opium-eaters who have given up the habit in the jail, have come to me and asked for the renewal of their passes. I sent them away saying that they should stop the habit.

Q.—You suggest that registers should be thrown open again.

A.—Yes and only for one more time.

Q.—We had it in 1925 and again in 1929 we reopened the register. Do you still want it to be opened once more for the last time?

A.—I say you should keep it open permanently. Instead of cutting the ration give the man what he wants. If he asks for $1\frac{1}{2}$ tola I say give him that.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Yesterday we had an instance where a man was taking 15 tolas and now he is put on ration and he is taking only $3\frac{1}{2}$ tolas. Would you say that a man should be given any quantity he wants?

A.—Within reason opium does not harm the man.

Q.—Who is to decide that?

A.—I think the medical officer.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Do you find any difficulty in fixing the ration?

A.—When a man is taking it within reason I have found some difficulty. If a man wants $2\frac{1}{2}$ tolas cut it down by a quarter of a tola and give him $2\frac{1}{4}$ tolas. That is what I have been doing, always cutting it a little.

Q.—What amount do you consider sufficient for an addict?

A.—On the average about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tolas.

Q.—You would not try any cure?

A.—It would be possible if you could take all our opium addicts into our hospital. But, as both the Colonels have said, they would come back and take to opium again as soon as they are out of the hospital.

Q.—Do you agree with Colonel Batra when he says that opium taking brings mental, moral and physical deterioration?

A.—Yes when taken in excess.

Q.—What quantity do you consider an excess?

A.—I should say three tolas.

Q.—Whatever the age?

A.—According to age. The older the person the more he would want.

Q.—Are you in favour of giving opium to young men of 20 years and below?

A.—I do not think that very many people of that age take opium.

Q.—Will you be in favour of giving them opium if they take?

A.—No.

Q.—What is the age in your opinion below which opium should not be given?

A.—I should say that persons below the age of 40 should not get passes. Above that age they should get their full dose.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—Do you all agree that the opium habit can be cured by drugs?

COLONEL RITCHIE:—I have not tried and I have no experience.

COLONEL BATRA:—I have no personal experience except what I told you about the jails. I have no experience of an addict coming before me asking to be cured.

DR. ARTHUR:—I have not tried any case.

Q.—Have you given tincture decoction instead of opium in the jail?

COLONEL BATRA —

A.—Sometimes when the person shows symptoms of distress.

Q.—You always indent for a quantity of opium for use in jails?

A.—Yes for use in medical prescriptions in jails. Now-a-days it is very little.

Q.—When you have to grant passes do you generally go out of the station with the Deputy Commissioner for that purpose?

A.—Yes sometimes

Q.—You generally see the applicant for two minutes, see whether he is anæmic, see his eyes and see whether he coughs or not. Is that not generally what you do?

A.—That is what I have always complained against. If you want to give an opinion you have to see whether the man suffers from dysentery and if he cannot be cured by other medicines. You have to see whether he is anæmic and also whether he can stop the opium habit without serious trouble to himself. It is a very difficult thing to say by sight whether a man is an addict and whether he should be recommended for a pass.

Q.—Is that the reason why you rejected 95 per cent. of the applicants when you were in Jorhat?

A.—I do not remember if I refused 95 per cent.

Q.—That is what is generally done?

A.—I can not speak as to the practice in the whole of Assam.

Q.—Have you at any time represented to Government tha it is very difficult to certify?

A.—Not in writing but I have spoken to the Deputy Commissioner and the Inspector General of Civil Hospitals. I believe that I told Mr. Mullan when I was in Jorhat.

Q.—Even then, you do not agree that medical examination is a sure guide?

A.—I do not agree.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Do the coolies know how to secure passes?

DR. ARTHUR :—They are not keen on coming for passes.

Q.—Do they know the system how they can secure passes?

A.—I could not tell you that.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—I wonder why they are slow in coming up for passes?

A.—The answer probably is that no one wants that he should be considered an opium eater.

Q.—Am I to understand from your evidence that you ar not in favour of continuing the present cut and it should be stopped?

COLONEL RITCHIE :—I am not in favour of the cut at all. That is one of the reasons for people being slow in coming up for passes. The first thing is delay in issue of passes—sometimes three months before they can get them. The next reason is the necessity for renewing them annually. And then they will have their rations cut when they apply. There is also the reason that there is adulteration of the stuff by vendors and shortweight. I was told by two Europeans who had shops (I will not give their names here), that there is this adulteration. These gentlemen have not got the shops now.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—You say they had shops?

A.—There is nothing extraordinary about it. I know them personally.

Q.—This is the first time I have ever heard of it?

A.—I know of two in this district.

The reasons which I have enumerated discourage men from coming forward and applying for passes.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Are the other two gentlemen of the same opinion?

tell you about the garden
hou . public are concerned they
din beginning for some trouble,
ich as dysentery and then keep up the habit. There are cases
here they have given up but I cannot say how far they have
ot resumed. Personally speaking I give passes only to those
ho require it for health and to the aged.

Q.—Have you got instances where complaint arises on account of want of adequate quantity of opium?

DR. ARTHUR :—

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you consider that opium does good to the health of people if allowed in moderate quantities?

A.—I do not think it does any harm.

Examined by MR. ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—
s it true that the people are cured of any disease by taking opium?

A.—It is beneficial to the health.

COLONEL BATRA :—It has done good in certain diseases such as dysentery, malaria, neuralgia, rheumatism, chronic coughs, asthma, nervous diseases, etc. As long as opium is taken under medical instructions it does not become a habit. But once a man exceeds that limit and becomes an addict, he is liable to excitation; he loses his will power and the time comes when is no good for work. That makes him continue the habit

CHAIRMAN :—That is what makes doctors careful in administering it even as medicine?

A.—They are always careful

MR ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURI :—Do you say that it is very difficult to tell by looking at a man whether he is an addict? If so how to ascertain that?

A.—It is very difficult to say.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Do you think that a small non-official committee would be more useful?

A.—It will be useful, you must have religious propaganda work.

Q.—As the Civil Surgeon cannot ascertain the existence of the for his health, it will are in to say

A.—If the committee is reliable.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Did you make any attempt to cure the 8 addicts in your gardens from their opium habit?

COLONEL RITCHIE :—

A.—No.

Q.—Did the Managers of these gardens think that they should be cured?

A.—No, not at all. The Manager does not consider opium as the biggest curse in his garden.

Q.—The Managers do not mind having it?

A.—They do not mind at all in the case of a few they have.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—You mean the Managers of these gardens for whom you act?

A.—Yes.

Q.—They consider they have only 8?

A.—The problem of opium does not worry them.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Shall I be right in saying that the existence of a few opium-eaters in these gardens is due to the fact that the Managers do not want to have opium eaters in their garden?

A.—They came up as opium-eaters and they were recruited as such. They are of middle age and over.

Q.—Probably they were not known to be opium-eaters at the time they were recruited?

A.—T hesepeople come and complain that they want opium. There is a man, for instance, who has been recruited six months ago. He has been getting opium from the central godown because he is not getting the pass although it is now three months he has applied for it.

Q.—Do you keep a supply in the garden?

A.—Yes, I keep a certain amount in the garden.

Q.—You keep that supply to carry on when there is delay in getting passes.

A.—Where necessary.

MR. DAWSON—What exactly do you get, what kind of opium?

A.—Tincture of opium, morphia, and solid opium for medical purposes. I can tell you that once my predecessor wrote to the Deputy Commissioner saying that it was irregular to supply from the stock and asking that the issue of pass should be expedited.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Can I take it like this ? At times there is delay in getting passes for the addicts in the garden. During those days until the passes have arrived, you indent for a quantity of opium which you supply to these addicts ?

A.—When the patient is in great trouble you issue from the medical stock. The Medical Officer, on common sense grounds, issues it from the medical stores.

Q.—Supposing the man applies for two tolas of opium till he gets his supply do you supply from the medical stores ?

A.—In one case only was half a tola issued during three months. That is not even a pharmacœpical dose.

CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—About how much do you keep ?

A.—I cannot tell you at the moment.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Do they not go in for smuggled opium ?

A.—No, he does not know how to go about it. He does not know how to steal tea even.

Q.—You keep him on by giving him medical dose ?

A.—He was given 25, 40 and 10 grains in all. He was not able to do work and he was fairly useless.

Q.—In your opinion anybody who wants to take opium ought to be allowed to take it ?

A.—Yes. Just as in the case of alcohol it is only when a man takes in excess that there is abuse.

Q.—Would you confine it to those who are intelligent and are educated so that they can keep within bounds ?

A.—Why should the literate man only get it ? Why should an educated man get liquor and the illiterate be refused *laopani* (rice beer) ?

The CHAIRMAN :—Is it a habit forming thing ?

A.—It is a drug which tends to increasing doses. Some people would go to the wall on anything ?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Would you agree to give opium to anybody who can be expected to use it in moderation ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And not to others?

A.—No, I would not issue it. If opium were free we do not know who would get it.

Q.—Opium eaters would like to increase their dose?

A.—Yes if they have the money.

Q.—You want to allow a man to spend on opium if he ge money?

A.—Education is the cure for it.

Q.—If you know that there are a large number of peopl who have been brought up in the belief that opium is good fo their health?

A.—They are gradually being displaced and being killed b more intelligent people. There are opium-eaters who have bee dispossessed by others who are not opium-eaters.

Q.—Still you desire that Government ought not to interfere

A.—I have seen these restrictions in force now for about years I think. I have not seen any improvement in the people at all.

Q.—In former days do you know that even respectabl Assamese people took opium?

A.—They are getting it yet.

Q.—Can you name anybody?

A.—As a matter of fact one of the worst districts in Uppe Assam I have seen many opium-eaters but I have seen no harm done to anybody. I am speaking of Goalpara.

Q.—Because there is much less opium in that district?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—In Goalpara there are only 8 seers issued annually in the whole district?

A.—Perhaps it is much less than in the eastern districts.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Do I understand that you have not seen much of the evil effects of opium?

A.—I have been in every district one time or other. I have served in three districts, the Lushai Hills, Goalpara and the Darrang districts. Opium is not the chief dope here.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—I want to clear one point Colonel Ritchie, and I consider it is very important. You have been telling us that two Europeans had some connection with opium shops?

A.—I said that I knew two Europeans who had opium shops.

Q.—What do you mean actually, do you mean that the licence was actually in their names?

A. I do not think it was in their names?

Q.—How many Europeans were concerned?

A.—Two were in this district and one was in another trict. One is not alive now and two are living.

Q.—How many Europeans in this district had opium shops?

A.—Two.

Q.—Were they both tea planters?

A.—No.

Q.—One was a Manager of a saw mill?

A.—He was in another district. You see they did not hold shops in their names but I understand they had shops. ne of them have at present.

Q.—You say that one of the two in this district is dead. Can u tell me for what reason he took it up, was it for the benefit his coolies?

A.—I would not like to say whether it was for his own pro- or whether it was for the benefit of the coolies.

Q.—Any European other than that?

A.—No

Q.—You do not know whether the other two took it for the nefit of their coolies?

A.—No.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI.—On the whole ey are 4?

A.—No, they are three, two of this district and one in another trict. I won't give the names but I got it from themselves.

Q.—Would you be surprised to learn that a number of rsons have given up the habit and not taken to it again.

COLONEL BATRA :—

A.—I won't be surprised at all.

Q.—There was an instance of a Gurkhali boy suffering from ronic malaria and he was an opium-eater?

A.—There are very many cases of chronic malaria I do not nember.

Q.—In that case he was not given opium and he was red of the disease of malaria?

A.—I do not remember the case. As I said we did not give ium except in extreme cases.

Q.—Would you be able to fix the ration of a man ?

A.—I will have to take into consideration what he says, and then from my own medical opinion I will come to the conclusion whether what he wants would be beneficial or not.

Q.—Then it should be left to the medical opinion ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that we should perpetually go on giving passes like this to anybody who wants them ?

A.—As long as you cannot control illicit opium coming in I would not advise closing the register.

Q.—If you cannot control it to a finish then you must go on ?

A.—Yes. Because you will be producing more and more addicts. Why should they suffer if they have taken to it ?

Q.—Dont you think that if you can make opium unavailable you can prohibit it at once ?

A.—If you can make it unavailable, then yes.

Q.—Is there any great harm ?

A.—The only harm is they will suffer until they get over the effects.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA.—Don't you think that some of the opium eaters will die ?

A.—Most unlikely unless they are suffering from some other disease.

Q.—But they could be treated medically ?

A.—Yes in the districts. But there are places where medical treatment is not available for 40 miles.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—These cases in your gardens, are they suffering from any disease ?

DR. ARTHUR :—

A.—No.

Q.—Since when have they taken to this habit ?

A.—Some of them came with the habit.

Q.—Could you not treat these cases ?

A.—You cannot treat them , it is a question of strict medical supervision.

Q.—But that is for a fortnight or so ?

A.—Yes, it is possible.

THE CHAIRMAN :—Is opium put in the list of poisons in England?

COLONEL RITCHIE :—Oh, yes.

Q.—Are poisons allowed to be taken freely by people in England?

A.—No.

Q.—If that is the case in England would you allow people in Assam to take freely what they want?

A.—Because it is the fashionable dope of the place; opium grows freely in Assam and does not grow in England or Scotland. Just the same in the case of alcohol.

Q.—Alcohol is not in the list of poisons?

A.—But then there are many that are added to the original list. Indian hemp was added; it did not use to be on the list.

Q.—I want to know why you would give opium freely in Assam when it is harmful in England and other European countries?

A.—I never said it is harmful any more than other dopes.

Q.—Opium is not issued freely to people in England?

A.—No.

Q.—Then why do you want to allow it to people here in Assam so freely?

A.—Because they are accustomed to it and it is not harmful.

Q.—Do you mean to say that it does not produce any harmful effects?

A.—European nations do not grow poppy to that extent. In excess it will produce some evil effects.

Q.—Would you advise that the European nations may take to opium in moderate quantities?

A.—No, I would not advise them. But I would allow people to take reasonable quantities if they want to have it.

Q.—Even those who could not control themselves?

A.—Then educate them.

Q.—You have seen opium-eaters in Goalpara and Darrang. Have you come in contact with many of them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you be able to fix the ration of a man?

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Q.—Even those who could not control themselves?

A.—Then educate them.

Q.—You have seen opium-eaters in Goalpara and Darrang. Have you come in contact with many of them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then have you known that people who have been takin in moderate quantities go on increasing gradually ?

A.—Yes, there are men like that.

Q.—What do you think is an excess dose ?

A.—I think that 6 grains a day is a beneficial dose if a ma wants a dope. But if a man gets to the stage of requiring thre or four tolas in the month then he feels sleepy and begin neglecting his work. Everybody admits that.

Q.—Do you consider that it is desirable to get rid of thi habit ?

A.—It is not by any means the most harmful of dopes ?

Q.—On the whole would you agree that it is desirable to ge rid of dopes ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Opium first of all ?

A.—I do not agree.

No. 16.

(*After lunch.*)

The Committee then examined :—

SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI, Tezpur Loca Board Member, and

SRIJUT MONMOHON CHAUDHURI, Mauzadar, Bali para.

The two gentlemen are brothers and they submitted separate, but very similar statements.

CHAIRMAN: —Are these opium-eaters Assamese or mostly non-Assamese ?

A.—Both.

Examined by MR. DAWSON :—

To SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—In your statement, which is more or less similar to that submitted by your brother you say : "Smuggling of opium in Assam exists to a very large extent" ; on what do you base this statement that smuggling exists to a very large extent ?

A.—A good many cases were detected at several places.

Q.—In what year ?

A.—Even in the current year, within the last six months. In Balipara also, there are two or three cases.

Q.—Are you talking of 1932 ?

A.—1932. In 1931 also there were cases.

Q.—Your mauza is at Balipara. Have you known of any cases of smuggled opium detected in Balipara area ?

A.—2 or 3 Chinamen have been detected during the last six or seven months.

Q.—What were the quantities ?

A.—I do not exactly remember the quantities. They are not very big.

Q.—But then you say, smuggling exists to a very large extent ?

A.—I also heard from several sources and a good many cases were detected.

Q.—From whom did you hear ?

A.—Sometimes from excise people and sometimes from outsiders.

Q.—Did you hear of big quantities ?

A.—I heard of even 10 seers or 12 seers.

Q.—Where was that ? Do you remember ?

A.—At Jorhat side, or somewhere like that. About 18 seers in one case was detected.

Q.—What year was that ?

A.—I do not remember.

Q. Was that many years ago ?

A.—May be 3 or 4 years ago or even more.

Q.—Have you heard of any more such cases ?

A.—One seer or two seers. I heard often of cases like that.

Q.—How often do you hear of such cases.

A.—Once or twice a year.

Q.—Do you call it often ?

A.—There were a good many that could not be detected.

Q.—If they could not be detected, how did you know that they existed ?

A.—We know it from opium-eaters that they get smuggled opium from the Nepalis who sell it to them privately. It is difficult to detect them.

Q.—Do you mean Nepalis in your mauza ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Being a mauzadar, did you take any steps to bring it to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner ?

A.—Several steps were taken to detect, but it was very difficult.

Q.—Did you report ?

A.—I gave information to the Excise staff as well as to the Deputy Commissioner. All efforts were made to detect them, but the smugglers were very careful.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—In how many cases did you submit a report ?

A.—I told them generally ; I did not mention any particular case.

MR. DAWSON :—Would you reopen the register of the unregistered consumers ?

A.—Yes, because there are unregistered opium consumers getting opium from illicit sources, either from the lessees or from the smugglers.

Q.—Will you open the register for a fixed time or keep it open for some years ?

A.—These should be temporary passes, first, for at least six months, and after watching what quantity is required, they should be given passes for that quantity.

Q.—My question is for how long will you keep the registers open ?

A.—For a short time. One or two months ; but then the fact should be published widely.

Q.—The argument on the other side is this : if you open the register, people who are not addicts may apply for passes and it may be a sort of encouragement to spread the opium habit.

A.—At the time of issuing passes, of course, careful enquiry should be made to see whether they are really unregistered consumers. But there is no difficulty here, because no one will come forward, I believe, who are not addicts,

Q —We have been hearing to-day and also hearing before, that some people who are taking opium are ashamed to come forwardfor passes. Is that your experience ?

A.—I do not think so.

Q —Do you think they would come forward quite willingly ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say some of the people are so-called gentlemen, and there are some women that may not come. Why would not these gentlemen come ?

A.—They will not feel it worth while applying. They do not like to expose themselves.

Q.—Is there any opium smoking going on in your mauza ?

A.—Privately, of course, and very carefully nowadays.

Q.—How do you know that smuggled opium is brought into your mauza ?

A.—I hear of it, but it cannot be proved. There are some Assamese in the interior and generally they smoke sometimes.

Q.—I do not want you to give me names, but do you really know instances of persons who smoke opium ?

A.—Yes, I know them personally.

Q.—Do you think that the opium habit is bad ?

A.—Yes

Q.—You would like to stamp it out ?

A.—If it is possible, it should be stamped out.

Q —*What is the real difficulty if it be stopped abruptly ?*

A.—Old people would be in great difficulty and some of them would even die.

Q —Have you any instance of any one who died ?

A.—I have not come across any man who does not manage to get opium. He will find it somehow, he will not die.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—Your mauza is in a backward tract ?

A.—Yes, adjoining the Balipara Frontier Tract.

Q.—Is it in the Tezpur subdivision ?

A.—Yes, in the Darrang district.

Q.—What do you think about the 10 per cent. reduction ?

A.—It should not be for people above 40 or 50.

Q.—Below that age?

A.—Below that age, if possible, some reduction should be made gradually.

Q.—Can you estimate the number of unregistered consumers in your mauza?

A.—I cannot give you any accurate figure, but approximately it would not be less than 150, I believe.

Q.—Are they opium addicts from before, or have they taken to the habit recently?

A.—Mostly from before.

Q.—How is it that they did not register themselves before?

A.—Because at that time, many were afraid. There were all sorts of rumours and some people said that there would be difficulty and so forth.

Q.—For this reason they did not come out?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know that the register was reopened in 1929 and that it was said then that that would be the last time?

A.—I do not exactly remember.

Q.—Were you not informed by the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—I do not remember.

Q.—If the register was opened and as many people were taken in as was possible in 1929, then do you again want it to be opened now?

A.—It should be closed afterwards for ever. It can now be reopened for a month or two.

Q.—Then people may complain that it was kept open only for a short time?

A.—There will always be some reason for them to grumble. Government cannot satisfy any and every body.

Q.—What do you now suggest?

A.—There should be wide publicity, and then it should be kept open for two or three months.

Q.—Could not the people give up the habit?

A.—Somewhere, either from the smugglers or from short-weight, they get opium. That is the reason why smugglers take advantage to demand high prices.

Q.—How do you distinguish between a real consumer and a supposed one?

A.—Passes should be given after the fullest enquiry.

Q.—Who should enquire?

A.—Some local people.

Q.—As a mauzadar will you be able to distinguish your raiyots and say whether a person is an addict or not?

A.—If I get the time, I shall be able to do that.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You ascribe the cause of smuggling to the restrictions on getting opium?

A.—Yes, I think so.

Q.—Do you not know that smuggling existed before the restriction policy was introduced?

A.—I do not know that.

Q.—Will you correct the statement if I say that restrictions existed before the introduction of the present policy?

A.—I take it from you.

Q.—Do you say that among the registered consumers there are some pass-holders who take opium for selling a portion of their rationed quantity to others?

A.—They may be selling a portion, but not all.

Q.—But there are others amongst the unregistered consumers who would also like to purchase in order to sell to others?

A.—Yes.

MONMOHON CHAUDHURI:—They are very few in number.

Q.—Did you make a survey of the unregistered consumers in your mauza?

A.—I did not make any survey.

Q.— Then how can you say?

A.—The men who have passes and who sell a portion to the registered and unregistered consumers are very few.

Q.—Have you any idea how many persons there are in the mauza who are actually not real consumers, but who traffic in this?

A.—I do not know. Approximately, they may be about six or seven.

Q.—Do you know them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know them by name?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how long have you known them traffic in this business?

A.—For the last 3 or 4 years.

Q.—Did you submit any report, giving the names, to the Excise Superintendent?

A.—No.

Q.—Did you report to the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—No.

Q.—Why?

A.—Because it will not be proved, and none of them will admit; it will be of no use.

Q.—These unregistered consumers are supplied with opium from short weight sales, as well as from smuggled opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you consider that short-weight sale is universal?

SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI:—I cannot say it is universal; there are a few honourable exceptions.

Q.—Have you any instance of exceptions in the Darrang district?

A.—I think the Excise people know better than we do on this subject.

Q.—I should like to know your experience in the matter?

SRIJUT MONMOHON CHAUDHURI:—There are honourable exceptions. One is the lessee of Balipara—one Nabin Chandra Chaudhuri.

Q.—Are you related to him?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are there any lessees who are not related to you besides this gentleman?

A.—No.

Q.—You say that there is a large influx of smuggled opium. On what basis do you make that statement?

SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI:—Last year I defended a case of three seers of opium. The man was sent to jail.

Q.—Do you think that was smuggled or short-weight opium?

A.—That was not Government opium; it was Malwa opium. There is also another case of 10 or 12 seers detected about two years ago by Srijut Rajani Bora near Behali. That was the case of one Serang.

Q.—When was it?

A.—It might be in 1930 or 1931.

Q.—Do you know of any other case?

A.—Many cases; almost once or twice a month and the quantity ranges from one or two tolas.

Q.—Is it all smuggled opium?

A.—Not all smuggled opium—some treasury opium, some Malwa opium and some Cooch Behar opium.

Q.—For the last three years, how many cases of smuggled opium were detected?

A.—Taking approximately two cases a month, it comes to 24 a year.

Q.—And that gives 72 cases during the last three years?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you speaking only of the Tezpur subdivision?

A.—Yes, I have experience of that only.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—On this very ground only you base your statement that there has been a huge influx of smuggled opium and if possible this should be detected?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know how many maunds of treasury opium are issued in the whole province?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Do you know the amount for this district?

A.—I had some idea, but I forget it now.

Q.—When there is a total issue of 422 maunds, if there be only 72 cases of smuggling, will it be alarming?

A.—It is not alarming.

Q.—Would you be able to say what would be the quantity of smuggled opium in all the 72 cases?

A.—I cannot say that, because the quantity varies from 1 to ½ tola. I cannot even give it approximately.

Q.—(Addressing Monmohon Chaudhuri) Can you give me an idea?

SRIJUT MONMOHON CHAUDHURI:—I do not know.

Q.—Do you know the price of treasury opium?

SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI:—Rs. 2.

Q.—What is the price of contraband opium?

A.—Rs. 4 to Rs. 6.

Q.—What is the price of surplus opium ?

A.—Almost the same. There is no fixed rate for this. If the demand is high, the price is also increased. It is sometime less and sometime high according to the demand.

Q.—Will it in any way affect consumers if the price of the treasury opium be increased ?

A.—It will affect the poor people. Certainly the price should not be increased.

Q.—You advise us not to increase the price of the treasury opium, because it affects the poor consumers ?

A.—Yes. Already they are very hard hit.

Q.—Will it not do if the register is opened as you say ?

A.—The register should be opened for real consumers only.

Q.—Supposing the price is increased to Rs. 2-8-0.

A.—No, I will not agree. On the other hand, I should like the price to be decreased because there should be no competition between treasury opium and contraband opium.

Q.—You know that in 1925-26 the register was opened ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In 1929 it was opened and it was definitely mentioned that that would be last time ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then again in 1933, do you advise that the register should be opened again, because there are supposed to be some unregistered consumers.

A.—I say that passes are already given to the applicants who come under medical advice.

Q.—You advise that opium should be given under medical advice ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you say 'medical advice' or 'medical prescription' ?

A.—After consulting medical authorities passes should be given.

Q.—That is to say, if he requires it for his health ?

A.—Then and only then passes should be issued ; otherwise not. We know that people in the villages out of some luxury take to the opium habit and we want that this habit should go once for all.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Both of you agree to this?

SRIJUT MONMOHON CHAUDHURI :—I do not agree to that, because I know there are many unregistered consumers in my mauza and I think after careful consideration they should be given passes.

Q.—Are not passes given even now?

A.—They are not given passes.

Q.—On medical grounds?

A.—They are given passes under great restrictions and there are many who do not come in on account of these restrictions.

Q.—Then you like that these restrictions should go?

A.—Not totally, but I should say, they should be a little more liberal.

Q.—Do you not apprehend that if you open your register now and keep it open for some time, say, for three months, more people would wish to come in later?

A.—If you carefully examine each case there will not be that risk.

Q.—Thereafter you would finally shut it?

A.—But it should be published very widely, and then after three months it should be shut finally.

Q.—Do you not apprehend that there may be again a lot of unregistered consumers even after that?

A.—I do not think so; but if there exist still some unregistered consumers they will have to be ignored.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—You are a practising pleader in this Court?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you gone to the rural areas?

A.—Yes.

Q.—On what business do you go to rural areas?

A.—Sometimes on Local Board business; also I have a permanent home at Balipara.

Q.—Have you to go to the rural areas very often on Local Board business?

A.—Not very often.

Q.—That you do at your own cost?

A.—Yes

Q.—What is the price of surplus opium ?

A.—Almost the same. There is no fixed rate for this. If the demand is high, the price is also increased. It is sometime less and sometime high according to the demand.

Q.—Will it in any way affect consumers if the price of the treasury opium be increased ?

A.—It will affect the poor people. Certainly the price should not be increased.

Q.—You advise us not to increase the price of the treasury opium, because it affects the poor consumers ?

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A.—The register should be opened for real consumers only.

Q.—Supposing the price is increased to Rs. 2-8-0.

A.—No, I will not agree. On the other hand, I should like the price to be decreased because there should be no competition between treasury opium and contraband opium.

Q.—You know that in 1925-26 the register was opened ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In 1929 it was opened and it was definitely mentioned that that would be last time ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then again in 1933, do you advise that the register should be opened again, because there are supposed to be some unregistered consumers.

A.—I say that passes are already given to the applicants who come under medical advice.

Q.—You advise that opium should be given under medical advice ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you say 'medical advice' or 'medical prescription' ?

A.—After consulting medical authorities passes should be given.

Q.—That is to say, if he requires it for his health ?

A.—Then and only then passes should be issued ; otherwise not. We know that people in the villages out of some luxury take to the opium habit and we want that this habit should go once for all.

SRIJUT [illegible] CHAUDHURI [illegible]:—[illegible] agree to this?

SRIJUT [illegible] CHAUDHURI:—[illegible] that because I know there are many [illegible] in my mauza and I think after careful consideration they should be given passes.

Q.—Are not passes given even now?

A.—They are not given passes.

Q.—On medical grounds?

A.—They are given passes under great restrictions and there are many who do not come in on account of these restrictions.

Q.—Then you like that these restrictions should go?

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Q.—Thereafter you would finally shut it?

A.—But it should be published very widely, and then after three months it should be shut finally.

Q.—Do you not apprehend that there may be again a lot of unregistered consumers even after that?

A.—I do not think so; but if there exist still some unregistered consumers they will have to be ignored.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—You are a practising pleader in this Court?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you gone to [illegible]?

A.—Yes.

Q.—On what [illegible]?

A.—[illegible] permanent [illegible]

Q.—[illegible] Board [illegible]

A.—[illegible]

Q.—[illegible]

A.—[illegible]

Q.—You come into contact with rural people very often ?

A.—Yes, as a member of the Local Board and also a a pleader.

Q.—On these occasions you discuss often about opium habit with the village people ?

A.—Yes, when occasion arises.

Q.—Do you know their mentality as regards the present cut of Government ?

A.—Some of them at least say that they are very hard hit by this cut.

Q.—Because they do not get their full rations ?

A.—Yes, that is so.

Q.—And because they have to pay very exorbitant price to make up for their difference in rations ?

A.—Yes, and some say that they do not get any.

Q.—The treasury price is very low ?

A.—Not very low, but it should be further lowered.

Q.—You know the present rate is Rs. 2 and that smuggled or treasury opium saved by shortweight is sold up to Rs. 8. The unregistered consumers have to pay this high rate, and thereby they are hard hit ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You consider it is ruining the people, because whe they can get treasury opium for Rs. 2, they are compelled to pay Rs. 8.

A.—Yes, they are selling their hearth and home.

Q.—In view of this fact you advocate the register to be opened and people given some fixed time to file applications and get their adequate rations ?

A.—Yes. The real consumers should be given their rations.

Q.—Would you give opium to whoever wants it ?

A.—No.

It should be given to those who are real consumers and who have so far failed to obtain passes.

Q.—Do you think that the Deputy Commissioner and the Civil Surgeon will be the sole authority for deciding applications ?

A.—Yes. And another member from the public.

Q.—Take it for granted that there are 100 applications from the Behali circle. Do you suggest that the Deputy Commissioner, the Civil Surgeon and other gentlemen from the town would consider these applications and would it be possible that they should consider these in town because they may not know the people that are in the interior?

A.—The applicants should appear before the committee in the town.

Q.—Would you compel them to come to the town?

A.—If they are keen they must come.

Q.—Are you not in favour of a small local committee?

A.—Yes, I have stated that.

Q.—So you are in favour of a small local committee and that the Deputy Commissioner and the Civil Surgeon will come to enquire into these applications?

A.—I do not mean that they should go into the interior. The local committee may enquire and the Deputy Commissioner will act on the report of that enquiry and on the certificate of the medical officer. Now, the applicant gets a couple of witnesses and the Excise Superintendent takes down their statements, and then afterwards sends them to the Civil Surgeon. The same procedure may be followed?

Q.—I want to know if you desire that these applicants should go to headquarters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You agree that there should be a local committee.

A.—Yes. But the committee that I have suggested for the town should function for the whole district.

Q.—You mean to say that this committee would be like the advisory board that sits for liquor shops?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think it would serve the public?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT MONMOHON CHAUDHURI:—I differ from this opinion.

Q.—You said, probably, in your report that the present policy of the Government is a success?

SRIJUT LAL MOHON CHAUDHURI:—I said that it has not met with universal success.

Q.—In your opinion, the [illegible]

A.—Yes, for those below the age of [illegible] but for [illegible] that age, there should be no [illegible]

Q.—Is Balipara shop a big one or a small one?

A.—Not very big.

Q.—Do you know the total allotted ration?

A.—Yes about 4 seers.

Q.—Is it far away from mauza camp?

A.—Not far away; it is within two miles.

Q.—Do you know from what places opium is smuggled into your mauza?

A.—Mostly by the Nepalese. I cannot say where they come from. Perhaps they come from Cooch Behar.

Q.—You mean contraband opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do the lessees dispose of the surplus?

A.—They give it to consumers.

Q.—In addition to that you have smuggled opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then there must be a large number of unregistered opium-eaters in your mauza?

A.—Yes, not less than 150.

Q.—How is it possible for that small shop to serve all this huge number of unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—It is not possible, and that is the reason why they get smuggled opium from outside the province.

Q.—Has this fact been reported to the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—Yes, and one or two cases have been detected.

Q.—Can you say why there are so many unregistered consumers in your mauza in spite of the fact that there was a notification in 1929 to bring them into the register?

A.—I do not remember that notification, and probably it was not widely published.

Q.—You do not remember to have received any notification from the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—I do not remember.

Q.—That accounts for the large number of unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Another reason is that they are paying a high rate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It is ruining the village people?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And they default generally in paying land revenue?

A.—Yes. Mostly.

Q—They have not even movable property for attachmen and except the land there is nothing?

A.—They have already sold what they possessed for purchasing opium.

Q.—Buying at this exorbitant rate?

A.—Yes.

Q—By bringing them into the register now, they will receive the advantage of getting their opium at a lower price and of having an opportunity of saving themselves?

A.—Yes, that would be a very great help.

Q—That would also indirectly help them in paying their land revenue?

A.—Certainly.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Do you hold the view that opium habit is bad?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You also consider that it should be stopped under all circumstances, and if possible at once?

A.—Yes, if possible at once.

Q.—Would you be prepared to advise us to recommend to Government that if possible some legislation should be framed to abolish this habit?

A.—If possible.

Q.—Now, you have said that we ought to open the register for sometime. Do you think that by closing the register there has been no effect at all in checking the habit?

A.—In some cases it has been beneficial.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—The present Government policy has succeeded in checking this habit amongst the younger generation?

A.—Yes, certainly.

Q.—And this is a very great gain?

A.—Yes.

Q—And the quantity of consumption has also considerably decreased?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you do not imagine that all this reduced amount has been coming from outside the province?

A.—I do not understand.

Q.—I am asking whether you consider that to the extent the quantity has been reduced as a result of this policy, the actual consumption also has been reduced?

A.—Not in all cases, but to some extent.

Q.—You want that smuggling should be stopped?

A.—Certainly, and smugglers should be punished.

Q.—For this you have suggested 2 remedies that the smugglers should be very carefully punished as also the mahaldars.

A.—Yes.

Q.—Perhaps, you will add that we should strengthen the preventive staff?

A.—I am not in favour of it.

Q.—What do you think of the preventive staff? Are they corrupt?

A.—I do not know about that, but people think them to be so.

Q.—You say that in regard to both district staff and the preventive staff?

A.—The general public do not distinguish between the district and the preventive staff. Similarly, also, the people say so many things against the police.

Q.—So you do not think that even if you strengthen the staff you can gain anything?

A.—It will not help.

Q.—You know nothing about the special preventive staff?

A.—I have no idea.

MR. ROFFEY:—How do you propose to stop smuggling?

A.—There should be sterner legislation.

Q.—You have to catch these smugglers first before you bring them under legislation. My question is how do you propose to catch them with the same staff?

A.—I cannot say.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—These opium-eaters are fond of converting others?

A.—Yes. Especially in regard to smoking, they sit together in a den, and they smoke more opium.

Q.—Do you try to report against them?

A.—But it will be difficult to prove.

Q.—You are hearing more of smuggling cases since the year 1929, or did you hear of them before that year?

A.—Only for the last three or four years.

Q.—Since this special preventive staff was introduced in the year 1929, are you hearing more of these detection cases, or have you been hearing of it even before the appointment of the staff.

A.—I cannot say that definitely.

Q.—It is contended that there was more smuggling in the previous years than after the introduction of the special staff. Do you hear of these cases because of this staff?

A.—Yes, that may be the reason.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—If it be found beneficial, have you any objection to increase the preventive staff.

A.—To bring in good result, certainly.

No. 17.

The Committee then examined:—

RAI BAHADUR PADMA NATH GOHAIN BARUA.

Q.—Do you approve of the present policy?

A.—Yes, it is a success, and I wish it to be continued.

Q.—Are you not afraid that the policy may be defeated by smuggling from outside?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Have you any idea of any smuggling in this district?

A.—I have only heard of it, but I have not come across any smuggling cases. That is the information I got as an editor of a paper.

Q.—You think that smuggling has prevented the success of this policy?

A.—No, it has prevented many people from taking opium and I have received much information as I am connected with the paper.

Q.—You believe also that there are many people who have given up opium-eating on account of these stringent measures?

A.—Yes.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA—

Q.—Are you in favour of opening the register to unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—No.

Q.—Do you think they are paying exorbitant rates for buying their rations from mahaldars?

A.—They may be paying higher rates than the treasury price, but I do not think there are many unregistered consumers.

Q.—In headquarters?

A.—Both in headquarters and in villages. There is no considerable number of unregistered consumers.

Q.—Do you go to the Behali side once or twice a year?

A.—Yes. I am connected with the village people through the organ of the newspaper.

Q.—Have you visited Behali side?

A.—Yes, I have visited many times.

Q.—Don't you think it will give relief to the poor people if we open the register?

A.—I do not think so. There are no such persons requiring to have their names registered.

Q.—What is the source of your information?

A.—Because I do not know of any unregistered consumers. I have not heard of any such.

Q.—Do you know Ram Prasad Agarwalla, a leading merchant of the place?

A.—Yes.

Q.—From his evidence, I may tell you that there are 25 per cent. unregistered opium-eaters in the Biswanath locality?

A.—I do not know, but I can say that it must be much fewer.

Q.—Have you any genuine information on that point and have you any personal knowledge?

A.—My information is based on the contributions to my newspaper.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—You have said you have got no information about smuggling. Some people have said before us, including the Excise staff, that smuggling is going on to a great extent. Do you believe that?

A.—I do not believe it. My information is that smuggling was going on when poppy cultivation was stopped in 1858. At the beginning we exported opium and did not import it.

Q.—Have you information of any other cases of smuggling than those that have been detected?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—What is your opinion about shortweight ?

A.—It is injurious to the people and I hear of this also.

Q.—How can you stop it ?

A.—Of course the department is best known to be the best advisers. As for me, I wonder how it can exist in the face of a strong Excise staff and the so-called preventive staff.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You were a member of the Legislative Council ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Some time you were one of the prominent public men in Assam ?

A.—The public knows whether I was a public man or not. I cannot say.

Q.—Are you the editor of a paper for a long time ?

A.—Yes

Q.—After considering all the facts that have come to your knowledge, you are of opinion that this policy ought to continue ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say that it will be advisable for Government to continue the policy ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is your considered opinion ?

A.—It is my considered opinion.

Q.—Now-a-days some people say that opium-eaters have not been able to purchase even the ration which you allow them licitly, because they have no money to purchase it and they are getting on without it on account of economic depression. What do you think of the suggestion that taking advantage of the economic depression you should immediately stop opium except in cases of persons who are very old and of those who require it for their health ?

A.—It may be a hardship for some time, but there is no danger to life. As for instance, you can see the cases of persons who are convicted and who get no opium in the jails, I am a jail visitor and I have questioned them on opium-eating. They told me that for a week or so, they felt some uneasiness but after that they go to work.

Q.—You say that it would be great mistake to throw open the register ?

A.—Yes.

No. 18.

The Committee then examined MAULAVI N. A. AZIZ, B. Sc., Nurbari Tea Estate.

CHAIRMAN :—Have you seen the questionnaire ?

A.—Yes, but I want to speak only on three matters out of it.

Q.—What is that ?

A.—The first would be, whether the pass system is adequate and whether it answers the purpose. I consider that the present opium policy is not adequate. It does not achieve the purpose for which it has been created. Firstly, the veteran opium-eaters do not get their full ration, and, secondly, some clever people amongst them incite other people who are non-opium-eaters and who apply for passes, and thus they secure passes and make up for the deficiency in their own quantity. Nextly, when the pass system was introduced, the opium-eaters underestimated their consumption for fear that passes might be refused their full amount and some of them did not even apply for passes, thinking they may be refused. There were about one per cent. of opium-eaters who thought that the habit was a degrading one.

CHAIRMAN :—Are you speaking generally or are you speaking about your tea estate ?

A.—I am speaking for all Assam. My home is at Jorhat.

These people take opium secretly, and they do not apply for passes at all. As for the present pass system, it has not served the purpose for which it was brought into being, because they could not get their full ration. Besides, also it results in the fall of revenue, and it is only a cut in the Government revenue and not a cut in the consumption of opium. The present opium which they get by passes does not last them for 15 days, and for the remaining period of 15 days they take recourse to smuggled opium or opium got otherwise. There are three sources—first, the savings by shortweight, secondly, smuggled opium and thirdly, opium from non-eaters.

Now I am going to assert that the pass system should be abolished ; I want that it should be brought into line with Bihar and Bengal, and that there should be no pass system.

Q.—You suggest that opium should be given freely ?

A.—Yes, whoever wants should have opium. It is not certainly worse than the *ganja* habit.

Q.—Would you advocate people taking *ganja*, because you say, opium habit is not very bad ?

A.—Smoking and drinking are very bad.

Q —We need not have a discussion now about the opium habit ?

A.—I am only saying that opium habit is only like all alkaloids.

Q —If your son takes opium, would you prevent him

A.—I would prevent him from smuggling.

Q —You won't force him to give up opium if he takes it ?

A —Yes, it is an alkaloid.

Q —You mean that it does harm and that you won't prevent your son ?

A.—I will prevent my son.

Q —But you will allow all others to take it ?

A.—My point is this : my grandfather was an addict of opium. At that time there was no pass system. Now, who prevented us from taking opium ? It was education I got education and I know that the habit is bad. So make your primary education compulsory and then opium will disappear.

MR. DAWSON :—You say that the pass system here should be done away with and that conditions here should be as in Bihar and Bengal ? Do you know that in Bengal the tendency is to introduce passes ? During the last 18 months, they have introduced the pass system in Cacutta and Hooghly.

A —If so, they will have the same bitter result as we have.

CHAIRMAN —Perhaps the whole of India will soon be coming in for the pass system which has been recommended by the League of Nations Do you think that in that state of affairs it is wise for you to follow your advice, or should we not follow the advice of clever heads of the whole world ?

(No answer.)

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—Do you consider that opium is good to the people of Assam ?

A.—No.

Q.—What means would you adopt to abolish this ?

A.—I have said that education is the only way.

Q.—How long will it take to educate the people ?

A.—It is up to Government, and if primary education is made compulsory then in five years' time it will be eradicated.

Q.—Have you any idea of compulsory primary education ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It is easy to introduce it ; do you think so ?

A —If the man that introduces it is [illegible] then it is not difficult.

Q.—That is a question of 'ifs'. Will you take it from me that I did actually try to introduce compulsory education but had to abandon the idea as I did not get proper support. Do you think that compulsory education is an easy matter ?

A.—In a very short time you will have an independent Government for yourself, and you can do what you like.

Q.—Are you a member of the Tezpur Sub-Committee of the Tea Association ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were you present with them when they discussed this subject ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you put forward these views before them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And they agreed with you ?

A.—Yes. Mr. Metcalfe asked me to see you and present my views before the Committee.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—You say that opium is an evil thing ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—As also all alkaloids ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you think about whisky ?

A.—It is an alcohol.

Q.—What is n alkaloid ?

A.—Quinine for instance is an alkaloid.

Q.—Drinking of liquor is a vice. Is it not ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And taking of opium is also a vice ?

A.—Yes. I would say, smoking of *ganja* is also a vice, and amongst the three, the worst is *ganja*.

Q.—The only panacea to wipe out this habit is education according to you ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know that this liquor habit which you call a vice is prevalent amongst the educated people ?

A.—They are pseudo-educationists.

Q.—Do you know the percentage of literacy in England ?

A.—Yes, practically all are literact.

Q—Is it not a fact that the drink vice is prevalent there also?

A—But in England they drink liquor when they give a toast. In regard to our people if you teach them to give a toast, the *mullas* will give us a chastisement, and they will excommunicate us.

Q.—Would you substitute opium by anything?

A—I would suggest no substitute.

Q.—So you say that if you have primary education it will do away with the vice of opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In spite of the fact that high education in other places has not been able to do away with such vice as liquor?

A.—It is not the fault of education. There the people want to have it and it is a question of their own line. For instance, Mr. Gandhi went to England. He took nothing that he used not to take in India.

Q—Do you know of instances of literate people smoking *ganja*.

A.—I do not know; I have not come across literate people smoking *ganja*, but they smoke *biris* and cigarettes.

No. 19.

The Committee next examined—

SRIJUT BHADRAKANTA SARMA of Mangaldai.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—How old are you?
A.—I am 27.

Q.—What is your profession?
A.—I am businessman.

Q.—Are you a graduate?
A.—No.

Q.—How far did you read up to?
A.—B.Sc.

Q—Have you a shop?
A.—I have a photographic shop.

Q.—Were you a lessee at one time?
A.—No.

Q—Do you know the present opium policy of the Government?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think it is a success?

A.—It is a success at least in my subdivision.

Q.—Is there a large number of unregistered opium-eaters in your subdivision?

A.—There were some, but there are none now.

Q.—Is there smuggling in your subdivision? And do you know that contraband is coming in?

A.—Before the pass system was introduced, we heard that there was smuggling of contraband opium; these men used to take opium from Cooch Behar and from the Eastern Frontier, and from Tangla to North Lakhimpur; some men were detected but no local smuggler was detected there. Men were detected with opium in their possession, but none were detected selling opium there.

Q.—You think that the opium was intended for Upper Assam?

A.—Yes, especially in the garden areas of Upper Assam.

Q.—Do you think that the register should be thrown open now?

A.—No, on the other hand, I am for total prohibition now.

Q.—Don't you think that it will cause great hardship if you stop opium at once?

A.—It will cause some hardship to the old people, but not in the least to young people.

Q.—Is that the feeling of all young men like yourself?

A.—That is the feeling of my subdivision.

Q.—How do you know that?

A.—Before I came here, I went to some eight mahaldars and the people there. They all requested me to represent their case which is that if Government did not give them any opium they would not take opium, and thereby they would be saved.

Mr. ROFFEY :—

Q.—Did the mahaldars tell you that?

A.—I met the opium-eaters in the shops.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Don't you think that if opium is abolished, opium consumers would go and take smuggled opium?

A.—Then detection would become easier, because it is only muggled opium that we have to stop.

Q.—What do the opium consumers themselves say? Do they express a desire to refrain from their habit?

A.—Yes, they are ready to give it up, they want that there should be no opium available and then they say they will not take opium. They say that if it be issued by Government, they will not be able to stand the temptation. If Government removes the temptation, they would willingly make up their minds and leave the habit.

MR. DAWSON:—Are you speaking for the whole of Assam?

A.—I am speaking at least for my subdivision.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Why do these opium-eaters want to give up opium now?

A.—They have realised that the cause of their misery is only opium. Also, at the present moment, on account of economic depression, they find that their position is getting more and more miserable. Some *kanias* have sold their small holdings and have nothing to live upon.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—What is the opinion of the mahaldars?

A.—I consulted the mahaldars and some *ex*-mahaldars. The *ex*-mahaldars say that opium is a vice as also the selling of opium. They also told me how they gave shortweight. I am sorry I cannot give any names. They say they are not gaining any money, and what they get by short-weight sales they are unable to sell now. One of my young class mates, a mahaldar, sold opium for less than the price of the treasury opium, that is for Re. 1-8.

Q.—Do you think that there is any section of the people which likes that opium should remain?

A.—There are many veteran smugglers and those who make money from opium they get; in the town there are two or three people like that. Except those self-seeking men no one wants that opium should remain. I can say that so far as my subdivision is concerned, this is the public opinion.

Q.—As regards short-weight sales you say that mahaldars admit that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you suggest any remedy how to stop it?

A.—You have to stir up the Excise officers. If [illegible] able to stop it, this only proves their inability [illegible] situation. They know it, and yet I wonder

to stop it. You may also engage the Criminal Investigation Department to watch the mahaldars.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You have come here to convey the request of the *kanias*?

A.—I visited 8 mahaldars and this is the opinion of the *kanias* and the people.

Q.—You know that there are 17 mahals in your subdivision and out of these you visited only 8?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any idea of the total consumption of opium, in Mangaldai subdivision?

A.—Yes, last year, it was most probably more than 17 maunds; in 1928-29, it was 44 maunds.

Q.—What is it at present?

A.—It may be less than 17 maunds.

Q.—That gives an average of a maund for a mahal?

A.—Yes, about that.

Q.—I want to correct you by telling you that it is 1 maund 9 seers?

A.—Yes, it may be so.

Q.—Coming to short-weight, it is universal in your subdivision?

A.—It is universal.

Q.—Why do they give shortweight?

A.—Because they must have some money and they must make some profit.

Q.—What profit do they make by giving shortweight?

A.—Formerly, they used to sell at from 4 to 6 rupees per tola to unregistered consumers; now it has gone down from Re. 1-8 to Rs. 3.

Q.—Do you know that the treasury rate is Rs. 2.

A.—Yes, the mahaldars have to sell the opium that they get by shortweight, at any price that they can get.

Q.—Is the decreased price due to economic depression?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do the opium-eaters, so far as their ration has been cut down by this policy, make up the difference by illicit purchases, or have they reduced the quantity gradually?

A.—I have no information that the consumers make up their rations from illicit sources.

Q.—Then from what source do you base your evidence which you gave before us that the opium habit could be stopped at once?

A.—I say that because they are not taking illicit opium and I am convinced that they have given it up gradually.

Q.—Have you known of people who have given it up in your subdivision?

A.—In my village there are five *kanias* of whom two are about 70 years of age and one is about 80. The oldest man used to take 6 tolas at the beginning of the pass system but now he is taking only $1\frac{3}{4}$ tolas. I know him and I can say that he is not having any illicit opium.

Q.—Is that your only source of information on which you base your reply that opium habit can be checked?

A.—That is not the only source. I should like to tell the Committee that from 1921, we are trying to check this habit. In that connection, we have come across various people, and when we visit villages we come in touch with *kanias*.

Q.—Are you a member of any temperance association? Do you go and preach?

A.—Sometimes we go and advise these *kanias*.

Q.—When did you go last?

A.—Last month I attended a meeting convened by the Barthagurbari Sadhini Sabha I think that is the name. They called the meeting and I attended it.

Q.—At present you are of the opinion that the Government cut of 10 per cent. for the next five years should be continued?

A.—If the habit cannot be totally abolished, the cut should be continued.

Q.—Do you base your belief on any other reason for which you think that this opium habit can be driven away from our province?

A.—We have got lots of evidence that prisoners are not taking opium in the jails. Even a veteran *kania*, when he goes to prison, has to give it up I should like to tell you here that most of the thieves are *kanias*.

Q.—Would you take it from me that I am myself a visitor of the Dibrugarh Jail for the last 10 years and I find scarcely a *kania* in the jail?

A.—That may at Dibrugarh.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—You have mixed with villagers?

A.—I always mix with them.

Q.—You say that many opium-eaters have given up the habit?

A.—Yes, even the pass-holders.

Q.—Have you come across any cases where these people have already given up the habit, but have again taken recourse to it?

A.—No, in 1921, we had great trouble in inducing a boy of about 18 years of age to give up the opium habit; when he went out of the jail he was forced to give up the habit. He is now in town.

Q.—Have you come across any other instances where people have given it up but have again taken to it?

A.—I can give you another case where a man took $1\frac{3}{4}$ tolas but later on he gave up the habit.

MR. ROFFEY :—You say that pass-holders also gave it up?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many?

A.—I have three instances.

Q.—Are they recent instances?

A.—I think it is last year, most probably, an old man of 70 also gave it up.

Q.—What became of their passes?

A.—Most probably, they have surrendered their passes.

Q.—Or could they have given it for the purpose of sale?

A.—I do not think so. They know it is a very dangerous business.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—Do you represent any association?

A.—Actually I do not represent any association, but I took the view of many leading men of the town before I came.

Q.—Can you tell us why we have been denied the honour of any elderly people coming and giving evidence before us?

A.—I think the fact of the Committee visiting Tezpur has not been widely published. I came to know of it, and went to the clerk in the Excise office and the result is, I am called.

The *kanias* whom I consulted told me that they were unable to maintain their family and they wanted that the price should be lowered.

Q.—In that case, they do not want that opium should go?

A.—No, I was going to say that not being able to find funds for purchasing their full ration they had to give up taking a portion of it, and they find it very easy now to give up the habit altogether.

Q.—You have mentioned before us only a few such instances. I think about 3.

A.—If I enquire, I can produce even more.

Q.—Are there any unregistered consumers in your subdivision?

A.—I do not know. Most probably, there are none.

Q.—What is the source of your information?

A.—There is one mahaldar who is my class friend. I was speaking to him and he told me this.

Q.—You also said that the mahaldars confided their secrets to you. Did they tell you whom they sold their surplus to?

A.—Most probably mostly to non-*kanias* and to Nepalis.

Q.—Is it for their consumption?

A.—No, for export.

Q.—Is there no smuggling in your subdivision?

A.—Certainly, but not as much as represented by the Excise staff.

Q.—You think, the smuggled opium is intended for export?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do you say so?

A.—This is an open secret and everybody at Mangaldai knows that opium saved by mahaldars is sent to tea gardens in Upper Assam.

Examined by MR. DAWSON:—

Q.—Where do you live? Do you live in Mangaldai subdivision?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what part?

A.—My home is two miles from Mangaldai town

Q.—Where have you got your business ?

A.—In Mangaldai I have a shop.

Q.—Is it a big business ?

A.—Not very big.

Q.—How do you manage to tour so much ?

A.—I am called by people outside to take photographs and as a matter of fact, I remain on tour, on an average, for about 25 out of 30 days in the month.

Q.—You said that most probably there were no unregistered consumers in that subdivision. I have got a statement sent to me by the Subdivisional Officer in which he says that the number of unregistered consumers in the subdivision would probably be about 500.

A.—That is only a statement.

Q.—You are also making a statement.

A.—I have got information from the people, I enquired in the 7 or 8 mahals that not a single *kania* nor villager told me that there are unregistered consumers. I would have known if there were unregistered consumers.

MR. BOFFEY :—But they would not have told you if you are a welfare worker ?

MR. DAWSON :—Yyaosud that you have a friend who is a mahaldar ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you ever apply for a lease ?

A.—No, I consider this business is bad.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Did you receive a copy of the questionnaire from the Subdivisional Officer ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why did you not give a written statement ?

A.—I did not know that I had to give a written statement.

Q.—How do you know that this visit of the Committee published to interested persons ?

A.—Even the Chairman of the Local Board told me that he had no information. I saw most of the pleaders there and none of them knew anything about it. Mr. Rajkhowa told me that he was asked by the Excise Inspector to come and give evidence but he did not come here because he was not directly invited.

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(*ii*) SRIJUT P. C. CHAUDHURI, Mauzadar.

(*iii*) SRIJUT THANESWAR BARUA, Local Board Member, Behali.

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Q.—It would be a good thing if the cut be abolished and hence no opium from any source is available ?

A.—I do not think this could be abolished.

MAULAVI MIR BAKAR ALI :—It is desirable to reduce opium gradually and as a matter of fact, opium is not being sold now as it used to be done; nor is it being consumed as it used to be consumed. I recommend a reduction in the number of opium shops My information is that smuggled opium is generally disposed of in places near the hills but not in the town or in the neighbouring places. In the town I think only the surplus is sold. This ration should be gradually reduced and the policy continued for the next five years, so that opium habit would be abolished

SRIJUT P. C. CHAUDHURI :—Those who are now taking opium, I mean the unregistered consumers, are getting their supply without taking opium licenses. I, therefore, consider it better to bring them into the register and to grant them passes. In my opinion there is no other alternative. These people have to pay very high prices, and since we cannot stop smuggling the register should be perpetually kept open. To prevent short-weight sales, you can introduce opium in pill form. As for smuggling of foreign opium you should keep a strict watch and inflict deterrent punishment to the smugglers.

Q.—Where have you got your business ?

A.—In Mangaldai I have a shop.

Q.—Is it a big business ?

A.—Not very big.

Q.—How do you manage to tour so much ?

A.—I am called by people outside to take photographs and as a matter of fact, I remain on tour, on an average, for about 25 out of 30 days in the month.

Q.—You said that most probably there were no unregistered consumers in that subdivision. I have got a statement sent to me by the Subdivisional Officer in which he says that the number of unregistered consumers in the subdivision would probably be about 500.

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MAULAVI MIR BAKAR ALI :—It is desirable to reduce opium gradually and as a matter of fact, opium is not being sold now as it used to be done ; nor is it being consumed as it used to be consumed. I recommend a reduction in the number of opium shops. My information is that smuggled opium is generally disposed of in places near the hills but not in the town or in the neighbouring places. In the town I think only the surplus is sold. This ration should be gradually reduced and the policy continued for the next five years, so that opium habit would be abolished

SRIJUT P. C. CHAUDHURI :—Those who are now taking opium, I mean the unregistered consumers, are getting their supply without taking opium licenses. I, therefore, consider it better to bring them into the register and to grant them passes. In my opinion there is no other alternative. These people have to pay very high prices, and since we cannot stop smuggling the register should be perpetually kept open. To prevent short-weight sales, you can introduce opium in pill form. As for smuggling of foreign opium you should keep a strict, and inflict deterrent punishment to the smugglers.

CHAIRMAN (To Thaneswar Barua)—Have you read the questionnaire?

SRIJUT THANESWAR BARUA :—Yes.

Q.—You know the opium policy of the Government?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In your opinion, is it a success or a failure?

A.—It is a success, because it has stopped the younger generation from taking opium.

Q.—Do you know of anybody who has given up opium on account of the stringent rules?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Where do you come from?

A.—From Behali.

Q.—Can you tell me how many you know that have given up opium?

A.—I know of about 50. These were opium-eaters to whom passes were granted.

Q.—You think that there is not much smuggling going on in Behali circle?

A.—Not much.

Q.—Or could it be that there is a demand for smuggled opium which is not detected?

A.—I do not think there is much smuggling.

Q.—How many unregistered consumers would there be?

A.—They are very few.

Q.—These few people, do you think, are buying opium from the mahaldars or from the smugglers?

A.—From the smugglers.

Q.—They are not buying it from the mahaldars?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Then there must be some smugglers?

A.—Yes. They go from place to place and collect opium from mahaldars and other people.

Q.—Do you think they collect foreign opium or do they collect treasury opium?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—Do you think that those people who are taking opium without passes are being ruined by the high price they have to pay?

A.—Yes, they are being ruined.

Q.—You think there is a desire to give up the habit?

A.—Yes, they express the desire to give it up.

Q.—You are not afraid that if the policy is continued, it would fail?

A.—I think the present policy, if continued, would be more successful.

Q.—Regarding registers, do you want that these opium consumers should be brought under the register?

A.—No, I do not like, because, if new consumers are brought into the register, I am afraid that other people who do not take opium will also come in to register themselves.

Q.—What is your considered opinion?

A.—I think the register should not be opened.

Q.—You want them to let them suffer like that?

A.—How long will they suffer? They will not suffer very long; they will cease suffering very soon and they will be healthy.

Q.—Will they not go a long way to buy opium from the smugglers?

A.—No, they won't take the trouble of seeking for smugglers to get opium.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You are a landlord of Behali?

A.—Yes, I have some land.

Q.—Have you any money-lending business?

A.—No.

Q.—There are 11 shops in the Behali circle?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And the average consumption is about 5 seers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Where do these mahaldars sell their surplus which they get from short-weight sales? Have you any idea?

A.—They sell it in various ways.

Q.—Do they sell it to unregistered consumers?
A.—Yes, they sell it to unregistered consume.s.

Q.—Is it a fact that there is a large number of unregistered consumers in the Behali circle? I may tell you that the evidence which we have received before the Committee from responsible officers of Government is that there is a large number of opium-eaters in that circle?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—You do not agree?

A.—I do not agree. In my opinion, I do not consider that there is a very large number.

Q.—In all these 11 shops how many unregistered consumers do you reckon?

A.—How can I give the exact number.

Q.—Can you give me the approximate number?

A.—I cannot give you even an approximate number. The total will be very very small.

Q.—Can you say whether it is 5 or 10 per cent. of the number of registered consumers?

A.—It may be 5 per cent. or 10 per cent.

Q.—Have you any idea of the number of registered consumers in that circle?

A.—Yes, I think about 500 in Behali shop.

Q.—Then, if it is 500 in Behali shop, 10 per cent. of it is 50. So there are at least 50 unregistered consumers?

A.—May be.

Q.—Then in the 11 shops, there will be 550 unregistered consumers? Is that right?

A.—The calculation is right.

Q.—But all these unregistered consumers pay heavily as you say up to Rs. 8 a tola to the mahaldars for the opium they get by shortweight?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Don't you think it is a very ruinous policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you like to stop it in the interests of the poor villagers, and do you wish to save them from the trouble?

A.—I consider that it is not practicable to stop that all at once.

Q.—Take it for granted that we will give them passes and they will be enabled to take opium at Rs. 2 from their neighbouring shops?

A.—I do not agree because it will be very difficult to distinguish who is an opium-eater and who is not. In this opium matter I am not in favour of helping them.

MR. DAWSON:—Have you got any opium shop in Behali?

A.—No, my brother had one.

Q.—For how many years?

A.—For one year.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Were you jointly with him?

A.—No.

The Committee then adjourned to meet at Gauhati [illegible] o'clock on the 10th of July.

No. 21.

The Committee reassembled at the Circuit House at Gauhati at 12 NOON on Monday the 10th July 1933.

They examined:—

GUNA KANTA MOHANTA, Mauzadar of Sonapur.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN, the witness deposed as follows:—

I have seen the questionnaire issued by the Committee. The present policy is a partial success. The reduction in consumption is due, firstly to the effects of the [illegible] connected with the non-co-operation [illegible] is due to the economic depression; [illegible] very miserable and he is compelled [illegible] Thirdly, the present reduction policy has also contributed to the reduction. That is why I call it a partial success because it has not wholly contributed to the success that has now been achieved. In my opinion consumers of over 50 years of age should also be subjected to the cut. I know from practical

knowledge that some of them whose rations are above 3 or 4 tolas did not consume their full ration and they dispose of a portion of it to other persons. The policy should be continued for the next five years But at the same time efforts should be made to prevent smuggling and short-weight sale. Smuggling of opium exists and also the practice of short-weight sale. But it exists to a very small extent and even there it has decreased to a great extent during the last five years. I say this because of the vigilance of the special staff and of the reduced purchasing capacity on the part of the people. To prevent short-weight sale the mahaldari system should be abolished. A responsible Government officer not below the rank of a Sub-Deputy Collector assisted by two *jamedars* on pay Rs. 20 to Rs. 30, should be allowed to sell opium in a centre consisting of two or three mauzas once a week. This, I consider will put a stop to short-weight sale. The Vigilance Committee should survey and take a census of the real consumers in each village in co-operation with the Excise staff, whether they are registered or unregistered. This will help to find the real number of actual consumers and then the Committee as well as the Excise staff will be in a position to keep watch over the unlicensed consumers and to know really the sources wherefrom they get opium. In this way smuggling can be checked.

The smuggled and surplus opium is sold at a price varying from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 8. Those who have attained the age of 45 and above should be brought on the register provided their case is recommended by the Committee and they get a certificate from the Civil Surgeon. I suggest that they should be subjected to a 20 per cent. cut so that the whole amount would be gone within 5 years. Passes should not be issued on any ground to persons below the age of 45 years. As for those who have already got passes and those who are in the book, their passes should not be cancelled unless they are below 45. I do not hold the view that the registered consumers have got passes in order to sell the opium. But owing to economic depression and as an effect of temperance movement, they sell a portion of their ration to others.

I am not in favour of increasing the present price of treasury opium. There should be a local Committee consisting of 4 or 5 persons in places where there are opium-eaters and there is no need for such a committee where there are no opium-eaters. The personnel of the Committee should consist of the Gaonburas and two or three honest and leading people of the village. The mauzadar will be *ex-officio* Chairman of the Committee. The Committee will keep a close watch over the registered consumers as well as the unregistered consumers.

Government should also try to persuade the consumers to give up the habit. The people have not till now been able to know the real mind of the Government whether they are in favour of eradicating the evil or not. In fact my view is that if the people know that Government want to eradicate the evil then the public would not lag behind in their endeavours to join the Government.

I am not in favour of strengthening the preventive staff as the Committee that I have suggested is more effective to serve the purpose in view. I suggest that detections should be rewarded. I do not know of men who have given up the habit on account of the reduction policy. I know of some Mikirs addicted to the habit. Some of them have left the habit on account of economic depression; I know also of some in the town who have given up the habit. They have not now got back to the habit. They may get supply from outside. But I do think that if opium is stopped from treasury then our people are not such that they wo ld get it from outside. If they could not get opi im easily they would give it up. If treasury opium is stopped to-day then the Committee that I have proposed will take effective steps to prevent the coming in of non-treasury opium.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—
I am a Mauzadar of Sonapur for the last five months. The opium shop is within a distance of less than a hundred yards from my quarter. There is only one opium shop in the mauza and they sell less than two seers. This policy has done great benefit to the Assamese people. I think the disparity in the number of consumers between the Upper and the Lower Assam Valley is not due to climatic conditions but it is due to want of temperance movement in the Upper Assam Although the sources of cash money in Upper Assam are greater than in Lower Assam, there the heterogenous people are less educated than in Lower Assam.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—
The policy has nothing to do with the disparity of the number of consumers between Upper Assam and Lower Assam as it affects both places equally. I have not seen that there is any good in taking opium. On the other hand opium-eating is bad in the young particularly; they become useless for their wives with the result that the addicts induce their wives to take to opium so that they may be docile. On the recommendation of the local committee supported by the medical certificate of

the Civil Surgeon opium passes may be granted to the genuine addicts of the age of 45 years and over. There is no moral improvement in the opium addict.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

I do not think there is much smuggling, there is certainly not as much smuggling as the Excise officers wish to make it out. I have already said that on account of want of money those with full rations are not able to purchase them fully. I do not remember of any particular opium smuggling case.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

I was an excise mahaldar six years ago before the initiation of this policy. From my experience I say that the policy is not responsible for smuggling; and in fact smuggling is very much less than it used to be. I am not in favour of immediately stopping opium. It ought to be gradual in five years as I mentioned already. In my opinion there will not be an increase in consumption even if economic conditions improve. My reason is that people have now realised that it has bad effects.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Those people who took to the habit ten years ago did so in the impression that it was good to the health Now they have realised that it is bad and they are not keen. This change is due to the economic pressure and also to the social pressure. There may be a few unregistered consumers but they are not by any means large. I have been a mauzadar only for the last four or five months. and I shall be able to give a list of unregistered consumers if desired in about a month.

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Since the adoption of this policy people do not take to the opium habit because they say that it is almost impossible to get a pass. The registers I consider should be opened for the unregistered consumers for the last time. Previously they did not come out for a pass for they felt shame. Also they did not think of this pass very seriously. I know that Government once before reopened the registers in 1929 and informed the people that it would be the last time. But I do not think that there will be great danger in reopening the registers for once only. I think that people have got accustomed to the reduction and they can remain satisfied.

I was a mahaldar for two years in the Bethna opium shop. My salesman was fined Rs. 50 and so I was debarred from getting the shop settled again. This was about five years ago.

No 22.

The Committee next examined Srijut JOGENDRA NATH BARUA, B L., Honorary Secretary, Assam Association, Gauhati.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q—You have submitted a statement ?

A—Yes it is at page 92.

Q—You say that this ten per cent. reduction has been a success ? What are your reasons ?

A—Because there has been a reduction in the consumption of opium. This is supported by the Administration Reports.

Q—Is that the principal reason why you think it is a success ?

A.—Yes, that is one of the main reasons

Q.—But don't you think that a reduction in the treasury opium may not be a real indication of success of the policy if the people who do not take opium from the Government treasury supplement their rations from smugglers ?

A.—I think that smuggling is less than one per cent. of the treasury issues and that is supported by reports also.

Q.—You base your belief on reading the Administration Reports ?

A.—Mainly yes.

Q—Do you think that all the smugglers have been caught ?

A.—That I cannot say but at the same time all of them should be caught by Government.

Q—If they catch one smuggler do you think it shows that there are others in the province that have not been caught ?

A.—Yes, there might be some more than have not been caught but there will not be many like that.

Q—Why do you think that there are not many ?

A—Because till they are detected Government cannot say that there are many more still undetected. Of course, I admit that there may be a very small number.

Q.—Can you give us any tangible reason for your holding that view ?

A.—I arrive at that conclusion also from the information that I get from talks with friends and also from the fact that Government themselves say that they have tried all means in their power to detect them. If there are many more a very much greater number than have been caught must have been found and punished.

Q.—Is it not the opinion of a large number of people that the Excise staff is somehow or other in league with the smugglers? I find that that statement has been made by some officers even. So I ask if it is the general view that the staff is not doing their duty properly and therefore the smugglers have not been caught?

A.—I have got no personal knowledge but I can say that there is some such belief.

Q.—Do you believe, therefore, that according to your statement the Excise staff have done their very best and they have been able to catch all smugglers or at least 90 per cent. of them?

A.—That is the general belief. I do not subscribe to the view that the staff is not doing their duty or that they are corrupt.

Q.—You believe that they have done their duty and they have been able to prevent smuggling about 90 per cent.?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then you say that the policy has been successful?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now if the cut is continued for five more years and if a large number of the consumers do not get their opium, don't you think that there will be smugglers coming into the province to supply the demand of these consumers?

A.—No. Because it would be a risky business and they would not get purchasers for their opium.

Q.—Don't you think that the opium trade is a very lucrative one and if they get high prices they would take the risk?

A.—But there will be no purchasers and the risk will be great. My view is that smuggling will be less.

Q.—It is only a matter of opinion?

A.—Certainly it is a matter of opinion; everything is a matter of opinion.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You mean to say that the theory that there is a large amount of smuggling is also an opinion?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT *MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN* :—

Q.—Is the opium question acute in your district?

A.—It is not so acute.

Q.—There are very few smugglers you say?

A.—Yes.

Q.—There is no strong demand?

A.—No.

Q.—Don't you think that it is extremely difficult to detect smuggling ?

A.—It may be difficult. The subject is usually shadowy and no one can hazard any opinion.

Q.—Do you think that it is rather easy to detect smuggling ?

A.—I cannot give a general anwser to that question.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Do you believe that it is as difficult as any other detection ?

A.—It is not so difficult as it is made to appear.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—Take an instance of a case where a man is bringing opium from Cooch Behar and is moving by road and foot tract. Is it an easy thing to catch the man ?

A.—If there is sufficient staff it should be easy to detect.

Q.—What should be the staff to keep vigilant watch over all the 150 miles of frontier ?

A.—This is a subject for the department.

Q.—Have you given a thought to it ?

A.—I have thought over it and I consider that when there is a ten per cent. cut policy Government should not depart from it

Q.—We only want to know some facts from which all these conclusion are arrived at. I think we had better leave the Government alone. The whole thing is in the hands of the Council and we are asked to enquire ?

A.—By the Government I mean the department generally. There is a suspicion in the minds of the people that the opium policy is not complete and defined.

Q.—We can make it complete and well defined. The question is whether the object will be achieved by the policy ?

A.—It will not be defeated; on the other hand the policy will succeed.

Q.—You say that smuggling is only one per cent.?

A.—I mean it is very small.

Q.—I want to put to you this question. It is so very difficult to detect smuggling and, therefore, one section says that only 5 per cent. of smuggling is detected; whereas another section says that it cannot be true ?

A.—I agree, it cannot be true, that only 5 per cent. has been detected.

Q.—Do you consider it easy to detect smuggling ?

A.—It is as easy as detections in any other crimes. I think there are other crimes which are more difficult to detect but which are being detected. This subject is more or less a theoretical subject and in my opinion it cannot be true that only so small a per centage of smuggling is detected.

Q.—We have to deduce some conclusion from facts?

A.—The actual detection in 1931 is only 31 seers according to the Administration Report.

Q.—We are trying to ascertain what quantity is undetected. We want some data to work upon?

A.—You have the figures given in your reports.

Q.—Yes. But the point is how much is left undetected. You draw your conclusions from the number of cases reported in the Administration Report?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You say that if there had been other cases of smuggling they would have been detected?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you admit that the number of unregistered consumers is very large?

A.—No, it is a very small number.

Q.—Are they new addicts?

A.—They are mostly new recruits.

Q.—How did they take to it?

A.—In these matters the contagion is made in company.

Q.—You say that after the pass system has been introduced they have taken to it?

A.—There are some who suppressed their names before the passes were introduced and there are many who have taken to it recently.

Q.—There may be old addicts too?

A.—Very few. The majority are new.

Q.—Do you think they would be able to give it up if they are not given opium?

A.—They should not be given any passes. Then they would be able to give it up. I have known confirmed opium-eaters given up the habit.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Have they taken to it again?

A.—No.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—Is it due to temperance movement or is it due to the policy?

A.—Both, I should say. It is mainly due to the change in the mentality of the people.

Q.—You do not advocate giving of fresh passes?

A.—No.

Q.—As regards this reduction, do you think that opium-eaters will remain content with their rations after reduction?

A.—Their mentality should not be looked into.

Q.—I want to know whether they remain satisfied with the reduction or if they have the craving still?

A.—Certainly there is the craving. The smoker has the craving, the drunkard has the craving; everyone has the craving. They will be able to remain content and you should look to it from that standpoint.

Q.—Does he remain content?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any personal knowledge?

A.—Everybody whose ration has been cut remains content with his reduced ration.

Q.—Do you speak from your personal knowledge?

A.—Yes from my personal knowledge.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Do you agree with the Superintendent of Excise, Kamrup, who thinks that there will be about four or five hundred unregistered consumers?

A.—I have no definite idea on this point.

Q.—Can it be less?

A.—It may be less; but it may not be more.

Q.—Do you agree that these consumers get their supply from shortweight sales as well as from smuggled opium?

A.—Generally the existing ration is divided also amongst others.

Q.—From that fact you conclude that there is a very small quantity of smuggled opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you consider that the price of treasury opium is adequate or should it be increased?

A.—It should not be increased.

Q.—Why? Will it not help the success of the policy if opium is made scarce by prohibitive prices?

A.—It will of course make the policy more successful. But it would cause hardship to others who are in the registered list.

Q.—You agree that it is very difficult even for the registered consumers to purchase opium on account of the economic depression?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you agree when I say that many of them have given up the habit or are reducing their rations due to the economic distress?

A.—In many cases they have been compelled to reduce their rations.

Q.—Don't you consider it a very opportune moment to stop the supply of opium at once?

A.—I would certainly advocate it and without any hesitation.

Q.—Will it not encourage the smugglers thereby to smuggle opium?

A.—No.

Q.—Why not?

A.—Because at the same time there would be, as I have advocated, a Vigilance committee.

Q.—Do you then think that you would be able to stop effectively?

A.—Yes excepting that opium will be given as a medicinal dose.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—You are the Secretary of the Assam Association?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that opium is not a problem in this district? Also do you consider that the experience in this district is not a safe guide for other districts in Upper Assam?

A.—Opium evil in this district is small as compared with what it is in the Upper Assam districts. But according to the policy adopted by Government, I think, it is the same everywhere.

Q.—Will you tell us the good results of the present policy as you approve of it and say that it is a success?

A.—The good results of the present policy are that it helps people from ruining themselves morally. But for the policy they would ruin themselves, their community and their country. Again there had been lots of opium consumed and as a result of the policy many of them have had to give it up resulting in their prosperity. In many cases those that have not been able to get their rations have diverted their funds and are now paying their land revenue regularly.

Q.—As regards issuing of passes do you think that the certificate from the Civil Surgeon is a safe guide or would you like to have a local committee?

A.—I am not in favour of issuing any passes under any circumstances except on medical prescription.

Q.—Don't you think that consumption of opium from illicit sources will then increase?

A.—I do not think so. It may increase to a small extent but that should be checked. On the whole I consider, whether there has been smuggling or not in a greater or less quantity, that it is a theoretical question.

Q.—Are you aware that opium consumers whose rations are cut down now get their supply from illicit sources?

A.—They cannot do it under the present cut.

Q.—Is shortweight common in Kamrup?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do they dispose of the surplus?

A.—I have got personal experience. In some cases they store up and they cannot sell. There is no demand.

Q.—Is it due to the economic depression?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you think that passes should not be given even to veteran addicts?

A.—New passes should not be given to any person whatsoever.

Q.—Don't you think that by stopping the supply to needy persons it will mean great hardship to them, and it may mean even risk to their lives?

A.—I have said that on medical certificate when it is a case of risk of life they may be given a medicinal dose. In such extreme cases what they need is looking after for the first few days and I have no objection to giving them opium on prescriptions.

Q.—Do you think that it is easy for a poor villager to come for medical passes from the interior to the headquarters?

A.—Even an addict does not die by merely giving up opium. He will certainly live and live a better life.

Q.—If they do not die, then do you mean to say that this opium habit can be cured?

A.—It may be cured and it has been cured in many cases.

Q.—Are you speaking from personal knowledge?

A.—I have personal experience and I am mentioning it to the Committee.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Why are the Excise officers very anxious to show that smuggling exists to a very large extent?

A.—It is a matter of theory for them also. They want to say also that there is so much work for them to do.

Q.—You consider that detection is not so difficult as they wish to make out?

A.—Detection is undoubtedly difficult. But there ought to be detections anyhow if there were cases and it is not so difficult as they make out.

Q.—Some cases of detections there are. But do you think that there are not many more cases of smuggling not detected?

A.—I do not say there are none; there are some I agree. But as I have already said, to carry conjecture so far and to say lots of cases are still undetected is too much.

Q — Do you approve of the idea, as somebody has suggested before us, that the mahaldari system should be replaced?

A.—I approve of it. Opium should be sold by post offices and dispensaries and so forth. I also consider that it should be sold in pill form.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q —Do you think that the few unregistered consumers are casuals or regulars?

A.—They are mostly casuals. They have been converted newly.

Q.—Even making allowances for undetected cases do you consider that smuggling may be very small here?

A.—Yes, at least in Kamrup it is very small.

Q.—Do you think that the smuggling cases that you have heard of are mostly detected on the way and that the opium is not meant for Kamrup but for other places?

A.—Yes, for other places where they may find some convenient sale.

Q —Do you think that you would make a special case for Goalpara and Kamrup and stop opium altogether at least in these two districts?

A.—That can be done and there is no hardship.

No. 23.

Next the Committee examined Dr. A. B. AYAZ —

The witness submitted a statement which was read by the Chairman.

Q.—When you speak of 'consumption of opium' do you mean consumption of opium obtained from the treasury or do you mean consumption of opium obtained from any source?

A.—I mean treasury opium.

Q.—Do you think there is any smuggled opium consumed by people?

A.—I know of one or two cases.

Q.—For how many years have you been a doctor?

A.—For the last 40 years.

Q.—Can a *kania* be cured?

A.—Yes many of them have been cured. I have treated many cases.

Q.—How did you effect the cure.

A.—I have given tincture of opium. They have altogether been cured.

Q.—They have not taken to it again?

A.—No.

Q.—Has this policy stopped the younger generation from taking to it?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know of some that have given up the habit on account of economic depression and also of the stringent policy of Government?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are in favour of the 10 per cent. reduction?

A.—It is better to stop it altogether after five years.

Q.—You know that after five years no more opium will be given to anyone except those over 50 years of age?

A.—Yes, that is what I want.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—You are a G[illegible]t pensioner?

A.—No.

Are you a p[illegible]

practise[illegible]

p[illegible]

No. 24.

(*Af er lunch*)

The Committee examined SRIJUT GOPINATH BARDALOI, Advocate.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q.—You have seen the questionnaire issued by the Committee?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is your opinion regarding the present Government policy?

A.—My opinion is that as far as it stands it is a success. My view is that it is much too slow in so far at least as the district of Kamrup is concerned. I cannot give a definite opinion about Upper Assam.

Q.—Do you want this policy to continue?

A.—I will go further and suggest that opium should be stopped at once. It may be done today if Government will take advantage of the present economic depression. At least so far as Kamrup is concerned, and in so far as the same conditions would apply in other parts of Assam, this should be done.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—You mean that the economic depression is as acute in other parts as in Kamrup?

A.—I am disposed to think so. Simply because certain coolies get ready cash, there is no reason to suppose that the economic depression is better elsewhere.

THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—If this is done, don't you think that smuggled opium will come in?

A.—I do not really think so. At the present moment very little smuggled opium is coming into the district So far as my experience of previous years goes I do not think that the quantity of smuggled opium here is very large.

Q.—How long have you been a pleader?

A.—About 17 years now.

Q.—Did you take part in propaganda work?

A.—Yes. I have been going round places where the opium habit was particularly prevalent.

Q.—You come in contact with opium consumers?

A.—Yes. My evidence will be more or less direct which I get from the opium-eaters directly.

Q.—Do you think that the opium-eaters would co-operate with you?

A.—There are different kinds of opium-eaters. The first are those who are seriously thinking that it is a great evil and that they would do well to give it up. Others there are who admit that it is a bad habit but do not seriously think of giving it up. And there is a third class who are fortunately few in number, who wish to go on with it. With them the habit has become so inexorable that they cannot give it up.

Q.—Which class is in the majority?

A.—Surely the class that likes to get rid of it.

Q.—Why do they not give up their passes without being compelled to do so?

A.—That is the difficulty in human nature. So long as opium is available they would like to take it. Some make an honest attempt but often times their courage gives way when in company.

Q.—Supposing treasury opium is not available, would they not be tempted to get opium from other sources?

A.—There may be a very limited number who would do so. But the majority would not.

Q.—Are you able to give us any definite information regarding smuggling of foreign opium?

A.—I do not say, as my friend Srijut Jogendranath Barua has said, that it is a matter of theory. To me it is not a matter of theory. I will admit that there is smuggled opium only when I know that the consumption in a particular locality is more than what Government has allowed for. Unless I know definitely that there has been some increase in the consumption of opium among the people, I cannot suppose that there has been any increase.

Q.—Could you tell us whether there are opium-eaters who have not taken their full ration from the excise shops?

A.—There are some but not many. On the other hand there are also of course a limited number who would like to supplement their brethren's rations, *i.e.*, the rations of those who have their quota and who want a little more. I have got a lists from Bethna of those who have given it up.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Do you mean to say that there are many pass-holders who have not been able to take their fully allotted quantity of opium?

A.—There are some but not many. Some have been compelled to give it up altogether.

Q.—Have you any knowledge of those or are you speaking simply from your own idea?

A.—I have personal knowledge.

I want to tell this Committee that not merely one or two persons have given it up in Bethna mauza which was the greatest opium consuming centre with 16 seers' rations some five or six years ago; it is now selling only about $3\frac{1}{2}$ seers.

Q.—There is only one shop there?

A.—There are two, one in Rangagaon and the other in Bethna. Some years ago the Bethna shop alone sold 15 seers. I am told that even the quantity that is now being taken by the mauzadar could not be sold. It is the same in the case of the ...tri shop which used to sell about 8 to 9 seers. Of course it is gradually diminishing but it is diminishing in greater proportion in the Bethna shop.

Q.—Do you know what they do with the amount that is ...?

A.—I do not know what they do. Most probably people are taking the whole ration nowadays. I have as a matter of fact had a list for which I asked the mauzadar. He told me there are about 80 persons who have given up the habit altogether and when I asked him for a list of their names he could not collect them all and gave me only 35 names but he said if he is given time he would be able to give the other names also. The name of the mauzadar is Golapchandra Chaudhury. This is the list which is in his handwriting. I have brought five of them and you realise the difficulty in bringing all of them from Bethna. They are among those that have given up the habit. One is from the town and his name is [illegible]. These people have given up the habit because of the economic [illegible] ...n.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Your idea is that advantage should be taken of the present economic situation and the opium [illegible]

A.—I was just going to say that [illegible] at once and now is the best time for [illegible]

Q.—Supposing your advice is followed and opium is stopped for the Khetri circle. Do you apprehend that opium will be taken by smugglers to that circle for sale?

A.—I am disposed to think that even if there be illicit sale it is bound to be very little.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Do you know what the price of illicit opium is?

A.—It may be a bit higher than the treasury price. But these people are still storing the treasury opium for want of sale. What chances are there for illicit opium?

Q.—What does the vendor do with that opium?

A.—I am told it is being stored now. In Khetri shop they are not taking the amount of opium allowed by Government.

Q.—Is it a rumour only?

A.—In many shops that is the condition.

Q.—You are acquainted only with these two cases?

A.—I am generally acquainted with many people.

THE CHAIRMAN :—You said that there are some men who have actually given up the habit. We would like to see them and ask a few questions. Will you please call them in?

(These men were broght in).

1. BHAGOTHI :—My age is 70. I come from Rangmahal village in Bethna Mauza. I do not take opium now. I was taking opium even in the great earthquake of 1897. I gave up this habit in *Magh* last. I used to take 2 to 3 tolas. I had pass and it had been eaten up by white ants. I gave up on account of the economic depression. I could not maintain my family and pay Government dues properly.

2. KAKHOM :—My age is 80. I gave up my habit of opium-eating a year ago. I have not enough money to maintain myself. I would not take it even if it is given free to me. I do not know whether it is good or bad but now that I have given it up I will not take it again. When I stopped it I felt unwell for a few days and there was trouble in the stomach for two months. I do not do any work; I am too old to work. I was taking [illegible] tolas but the last amount I have been taking before giving up is one to two tolas.

I know there were about 700 or 800 opium-eaters in Bethna. Now there are only about 200. The rest have given up the habit.

Formerly I used to take illicit opium but now I had not money for even my ration. Seeing that it harmed me to a great extent I gave it up. The idea among opium-eaters is that Government want us to give up the habit. We all belong to the 'Saru Koch' caste.

3. ANDHAR :—I have not totally given it up. I have a *patta* yet, but I am determined to give it up I have taken half the ration given in the *patta* and I would not be able to take the other half. My age as given in the pass is 60. Formerly my ration was 3 tolas but now I take only 1¼ tolas.

4. MAGHUR :—My age as given in the *patta* is 50. I am not taking opium now. I gave it up six months ago. It is a six monthly pass and afterwards it was not given me back. I have been taking opium for the last four years and before that I did not take opium. I started it when I got a pain in my stomach. I have not sold any portion of my opium. I would not take opium even if it is given without money. It is such a bad habit. I gave it up voluntarily without outside persuasion. I do not know of anyone who takes opium without a pass.

5. SUMBORA KACHARI :—My age is 40. I am Rabha by caste. I gave up opium 2½ years ago. I gave it up because of the economic depression and I could not even pay my land revenue. I do not like my wife and children taking opium. I took it originally because I was suffering from some disorder of the bowels. There are some six opium-eaters in my village who have given it up. There are no unregistered consumers in my village Tumlihat in Bethna Circle.

6. RUPSINGH KACHARI :—I am 60 years old. I took opium before but I do not take it now. I left off the habit when I was convicted and served in the jail. I was in jail for only a month. I came out of the jail about six months ago. I took opium till I was taken to the jail and I was taking it 8 years prior to that. In the jail I was not allowed to take opium. I felt discomfort for only five days and I could not do any work then. But I was given some medicine by the doctor. Formerly I was taking 2 tolas and then it was reduced to 1 tola. I suffered from dysentery sometime ago and then I started taking opium. I had two tolas in the *patta* and it was reduced to one tola and a half. I do not know why it was reduced: my age in the *patta* also is given as 60. Somehow it was reduced to 1½ tolas. This was the amount which I used to get regularly. I never made up the reduced ration by any other means. One can easily give up the habit by gradual reduction of ration.

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(Examination of SRIJUT GOPINATH BARDALOI wa then resumed.)

WITNESS :—I would like to explain this. The above wi nesses were called before you at my suggestion. The Exci Superintendent asked if I could suggest witnesses and I suggest these people. They were brought here by the excise peon.

Q.—Are you in favour of the re-opening of the registers?

A.—No.

Q.—You suggested that opium should be stopped altogether now. Supposing that is not accepted for some reason, then what is your view as regards this policy, do you think it should be continued for the next five years and in the meantime addicts be brought into the register?

A.—Under no circumstances would I recommend the registers being opened again.

Q.—Supposing they are?

A.—I have nothing to say with regard to a matter which I do not advise.

Q.—Supposing the situation is otherwise in other districts?

A.—Even then my view is the same. The people that are taking opium without passes know that they are taking opiun secretly and they are in a position to give it up. I have no doubt that from my experience of what I have seen they ca very well remain without taking opium.

Q.—Supposing in other districts they want to have opiun and it is not very difficult to get it from smugglers—the condi tions there being different from those in the Kamrup district would you not, in that case, think it reasonable to bring thes people into the register?

A.—No. I think the remedy will be to stop smugglin instead of re-opening the register. As a matter of fact I hav serious objection to give evidence before this Committee on th point. My objection is simply for the reason that the whol thing was done on the assumption that it is not possible t stop smuggling. On the other hand the point is that if it considered an evil as it has been considered to be, then th only remedy is to stop the evil and give no further latitude t the people.

Q.—What about other districts where smuggling is easy. Would it not be better to open the register ?

A.—I do not know how it would improve the position of the consumers. The thing is smuggled opium is bound to be haphazard, at times they will get it and at times not. If you regularise consumption they will always get opium.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—But they will always get it from the shops from shortweight sale ?

A.—You must see that they do not. It is for the excise staff.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—What means do you suggest ?

A.—I think you can issue it in pill form. The thing is, as I have said before, if you regularise it they will always get it and if you do not, the consumers will rarely get opium as the smugglers do not come regularly. But then so far as Kamrup is concerned the number is very small.

Q.—Then you do not agree with the Excise staff when they say that there is a large amount of smuggling ?

A.—That is more or less a conjecture on their part. As far as I am concerned it is a fact because there are not many cases of detection and therefore the onus of proof is entirely on those who want to establish that there is so much smuggling undetected. If they cannot prove it definitely before this Committee, then all their plea of more smuggling is a vague theory which need not be taken seriously.

Q.—Do you think that by bringing the needy people on the register they could be induced to give up the habit ?

A.—In the case of these illiterate people, the Rabhas, you have seen they have been reduced to the position when they have had to give it up themselves. But the difficulty is the more you exploit them the more temptation for them to get addicted to the habit. This habit is found to persist where we find that there are persons who carry on this exploitation. Take Khetri for instance. There are those who want labour and, therefore, the habit is persisting. In Upper Assam again where there is a large demand for labour you will see the habit persisting. At least the tea garden employers cannot be as interested as others are in the matter of seeing that the evil goes.

THE CHAIRMAN :—But then we have before us evidence from some tea garden Managers and they definitely say that this is an evil habit and it should go. One Manager told our Secretary that there are instructions in some gardens that no opium-eater should be recruited ?

A.—It is all to the good. But I am saying that this is one of the reasons why the habit continues. And it is seen that it is not the interest of the labour employer to see that the habit disappears in the same way as it is the interest of the others.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY—

Q.—Do you know instances of places where it is very difficult to get servants ?

A.—Yes. In Khetri, for example, the best way of tempting a man to become your servant is to give him the temptation of opium. What I mean is that there are opium-eaters who would be tempted to accept service by the offer of opium.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—We have heard some people come and give evidence before us that they have given up the habit. Don't you think that they are solitary examples ?

A.—Certainly not. I have already said that the mauzadar told me there would be about 80 to 100 of them who have given it up but on the spot he was able to jot down only 34 names which I have produced before you.

Q.—Are they not exceptions to the rule ?

A.—So far as Bethna mauza is concerned this has become the rule.

Q.—In spite of all that they said before us do you think that they have really given up the habit on account of the policy ?

A.—There were a lot of people during the Non-co-operation time who gave it up. May be that a small percentage of them went back but there are a large number of them who have entirely given up the habit. In this case, there is no question of policy but they have been compelled to give it up for the economic distress.

Q.—Have you any apprehension that they may revert to the habit ?

A.—You have asked them questions yourselves. I have no other fresh opinion than what you could have formed yourself.

Q.—In other parts we have heard that they take illicit opium paying a high price. They are not able to give up the habit, just like these men that say they have given up the habit. In those cases at least what would be your advice?

A.—Human nature is the same everywhere. If these people could do it, I do not see any reason why others should not be able to give it up.

THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—These people may not be addicts in the strict sense. You have heard that one man took to the habit only 4 years ago?

A.—One of them was 80 years old and I met that man in connection with a case in 1917 and he was then an opium-eater. He was under remand for a short time and when he came out he was actually prostrate. It is this man that I see to-day so well and I could not recognise him at first.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—

Q.—If the facts that I have mentioned before are assumed, namely that in other parts there are men who could not give it up having been accustomed for a long time and that smuggled opium is easy to obtain, then what is your advice?

A.—I have already given a reply that the man who gets his supply from illicit sources cannot have it regularly and he depends on a precarious supply. So it should be possible for him to leave the habit.

Q.—Probably you do not realise that there are people who will give anything to get their opium. If you pay the proper price there is no difficulty in procuring opium for use?

A.—That is all the more reason you should immediately stop it.

Q.—One man went to the extent of selling two of his daughters for the sake of getting opium?

A.—Even then I would not advise. My own idea is that such a man is not fit to be in society if he cannot give it up even when reduced to that plight.

Q.—What would you do with such men, would you shoot them?

A.—I would do all I can to induce them to give up the habit.

Q.—If you have a large number of men demanding opium would you not think that they would create a field for smuggled opium ?

A.—It is an evil demand. An evil is an evil and must be stopped by all possible and available means.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Do you admit that there is a large number of unregistered consumers in the province ?

A.—So far as Kamrup is concerned it is very small. I cannot speak for the other parts of the Assam.

Q.—Do you admit that there are from 4 to 5 hundred unregistered consumers ?

A.—I do not think it would be even half that number. The most important place is the Bethna circle and in Chaigaon.

Q.—You know these two places well ?

A.—I know the places very well.

Q.—Why do you go there ?

A.—I am a member of the Local Board for the Khetri side. People wanted me there in connection with some organisation. I am also a member of the municipality.

Q.—So you say that you come in contact with them very often ?

A.—I come in contact with them in connection with my profession. They also often come to me at Gauhati and see me and so there is a mutual contact and we meet very often.

Q.—You have a large clientèle among the people of Bethna ?

A.—Yes to a certain extent. There is no question of a large clientèle nowadays.

Q.—So you can tell us with authority that there is not a large number of consumers in that place ?

A.—I can certainly say that.

Q.—You are of opinion that these unregistered consumers, whatever their number, should not be brought to the register ?

A.—No. When I see people can give it up and have given up the habit, I cannot have a soft corner for these others who can similarly give it up.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Do you know that shortweight is a common practice in your district ?

A.—I am told that was so when the country was in affluent circumstances.

Q.—Is that practice in force now?

A.—I do not think it could be like that now.

Q.—You have no knowledge?

A.—I have knowledge that it is not so. But even if there is some shortweight it cannot be to such a high degree. These are days when eve[illegible] not be sold and how can I believe that [illegible]rge degree?

Q.—Can you [illegible]ling this problem of shortweight?

A.—If Government would only be prepared to spend more money and give opium in pill form the little shortweight danger that there is will disappear.

Q.—Have you any other means?

A.—I have not given a thought over this matter. My point is that so far as the registration of new consumers is concerned that is not at all affected by this shortweight.

Q.—Is it not a fact that you base your views on your experience of this district?

A. [illegible]

Q[illegible]f opium you deposed only from [illegible] district?

A.—Yes. But that does not affect the issue. Human nature is not very different in other places from what it is in Kamrup.

Q.—Would you agree that what you suggest here applies only to Kamrup?

A.—So far as human nature is concerned, if it is possible to [illegible]medy in one place why should it not be possible [illegible]

[illegible] you any experience of the Upper Assam districts?

A.—I have some experience but not much.

Q.—Did you go there?

A.—Yes. I was the Managing Director of Govindpur Tea Estate.

Q.—Did you go into the interior in Upper Assam to preach temperance?

A.—I think I went once or twice. I have moved with the people in the Upper Assam districts.

Q.—At the beginning of your evidence you said that there are two classes of people. One were co-operators and the other were non-co-operators?

A.—I said there were three classes.

Q.—You are a very busy advocate in this district an you have a long experience. Why did you waste your time b frequent visits to Bethna ?

A.—I told you why already.

Q.—Are you fond of doing public work ?

A.—I cannot give that certificate to myself.

Q.—You said in your evidence early that the number of addicts is diminishing ? What is that due to ?

A.—I have already said that it is due to the economic depression. I have also already said that Government should take full advantage of the situation and stop the evil at once.

Q.—You also said that 80 to 100 addicts gave up the habit in Bethna. It is due to preaching of temperance there ?

A.—That was a long time before. Just now it is due to the economic depression.

Q.—Have you any other business at Bethna ?

A.—Not much.

Q.—Is the mouzadar there your relative ?

A.—He is not my relative. He comes to me now and then just like anyone of you will. I used to go to Bethna in connection with some work of public utility.

Q.—Excuse my asking you a question as a member of this Committee. Have you any connection with any opium shop ?

A.—You can certainly put me that question. I have absolutely no connection with any opium shop.

Q.—Do you go frequently to preach temperance ?

A.—After the adoption by Government of this policy w are not really doing such propaganda as we used to do befor Because we considered that this policy was doing some goo and we were quite prepared to wait for its normal life of 1 years.

Q.—Did you join in picketing ?

A.--No.

Q.—Did you preach or visit any other places in the Upp Assam districts ?

A.—I visited Jorhat particularly.

Q.—Have you any experience that the habit can be cur by drugs ?

A.—No drug is necessary. Indulgence in opium is a psych logical question.

Q.—Has the Government policy done any good to the public?

A.—It has done good to the extent that it stands for.

Q.—You mean by following the ten per cent. cut?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are now in favour of the continuance of the 10 per cent. policy if Government decide not to adopt your recommendation for the total prohibition immediately?

A.—That is the obvious implication of my answers.

No. 25.

The next witness examined was SRIJUT LOHIT CHANDRA NAYAK.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN.—

Q.—You have seen the questionnaire. What is your idea about the success of the policy?

A.—It has been successful in my opinion. It should be continued for the next five years.

Q.—You think there will be no fear of smuggling?

A.—It may be here and there but that will not affect the policy.

Q.—Do you say that people will not resort to illicit opium?

A.—There may be illicit sale of opium. But that will not cause much harm. To my mind the number of such sales is few and far between.

Q.—You have heard Mr. Bardaloi's evidence. Are you of the same views as he expressed?

A.—I had already formed my views when I read the questionnaire. I have also now heard his evidence.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Do you not think that smuggling has increased as a result of this policy?

A.—I do not think so. It is only the plea put forward by the department in order to justify their existence.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—You mean to say that in spite of our Penal Code and the police force you have not been able to stamp out crime completely. So also there may be some smuggling but that is no plea for allowing opium more

A.—Yes.

Q.—So also smuggling may remain in some quarters?

A.—Yes, I say that all attempts should be made to stop it.

Q.—You are an *ex*-M.L.C. ?

A.—I was an M.L.C. I was also the Chairman of the Local Board for Barpeta and I was also a war Extra Assistant Commissioner for sometime. I am now practising at Gauhati.

Examined by Rai Bahadur NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Is it not a fact that shortweight practice is going on in your subdivision ?

A.—I have information that it is.

Q.—How do the lessees dispose of the shortweight surplus ?

A.—I am told that if a pass-holder goes to the shop for on tola he gets only 12 annas. So far as my information goes it i disposed of in supplementing the rations that have been cut.

Q.—And also probably it is given to the unregistered opium consumers ?

A.—May be.

Q.—Have you any idea as to the rate at which this surplus is sold ?

A.—I am informed that the price is higher than the treasury price. I think it is sometimes Rs. 3 or Rs. 3-8-0.

Q.—Not more than that ?

A.—I have not heard of it.

Q.—Have you any knowledge of the number of unregistered opium-eaters ?

A.—There may be some but their number is few and far between.

Q.—Do you think it would be advisable for Government o for us to recommend to open the registers and bring them in ?

A.—I am dead against it. If you go on opening the regis ters you will never save the nation.

Q.—Don't you think that it would relieve these poor peopl who are now paying exorbitant prices?

A.—I am of the opinion that at times it is better t sacrifice some for the sake of the many. But then people d not die for not taking opium.

Q—Do you think that the present price of treasury opium ...hibitive?

A—It sometimes seems to me to be so. If the price is ...ed and the duty is lessened I think it would act as an ...ive check

Q—Can I take it that you know many mahaldars?

A—I know these people. I think that if their morale is ...e improved then you should get a better sort of men to whom ... should give licences.

Q—Are you in favour of continuing the present cut for ...other five years?

A—Yes it should continue for the next five years.

Q—And no new addicts should be given passes?

A—No

Q—You will make provision for cases on medical grounds?

A—If there is necessity and if the doctor certifies it to be ...ecessary for his health

Q—Would you advise any age-limit for giving passes?

A—I would put it at 40.

Q—Are you in favour of granting new passes at all?

A—I have already said that I am not

Q—You are of opinion that after these five years there will be no opium?

A—Yes I would like to see that we are free from the opium poison

THE CHAIRMAN —

Q—According to the present policy opium will continue to remain for those who are over 50?

A—I say that no new passes should be given to persons below 40

Q—You say that lessees sell their shortweight opium to pass holders whose rations have been reduced?

A—I know it from a friend of mine

Q—The Government policy has up to date reduced 50 per cent of the rations. If the consumers do not get used to the reduced quantity then how do you suppose that the habit will be given up?

A—What cannot be cured must be endured. So when they find that they will not have further opium the habit itself will die. Now they are getting their craving supplied but if they cannot get it it would be a trophy.

Q.—So also smuggling may remain in some quarters?

A.—Yes, I say that all attempts should be made to stop it.

Q.—You are an *ex*-M.L.C.?

A.—I was an M.L.C. I was also the Chairman of the Local Board for Barpeta and I was also a war Extra Assistant Commissioner for sometime. I am now practising at Gauhati.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—Is it not a fact that shortweight practice is going on in your subdivision?

A.—I have information that it is.

Q.—How do the lessees dispose of the shortweight surplus?

A.—I am told that if a pass-holder goes to the shop for one tola he gets only 12 annas. So far as my information goes it is disposed of in supplementing the rations that have been cut.

Q.—And also probably it is given to the unregistered opium consumers?

A.—May be.

Q.—Have you any idea as to the rate at which this surplus is sold?

A.—I am informed that the price is higher than the treasury price. I think it is sometimes Rs. 3 or Rs. 3-8-0.

Q.—Not more than that?

A.—I have not heard of it.

Q.—Have you any knowledge of the number of unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—There may be some but their number is few and far between.

Q.—Do you think it would be advisable for Government or for us to recommend to open the registers and bring them in?

A.—I am dead against it. If you go on opening the registers you will never save the nation.

Q.—Don't you think that it would relieve these poor people who are now paying exorbitant prices?

A.—I am of the opinion that at times it is better to sacrifice some for the sake of the many. But then people do not die for not taking opium.

Q.—Do you think that the present price of treasury opium is prohibitive?

A.—It sometimes seems to me to be so. If the price is reduced and the duty is lessened I think it would act as an effective check.

Q.—Can I take it that you know many mahaldars?

A.—I know these people I think that if their morale is to be improved then you should get a better sort of men to whom you should give licences.

Q.—Are you in favour of continuing the present cut for another five years?

A.—Yes it should continue for the next five years.

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Q.—You will make provision for cases on medical grounds?

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Q.—Would you advise any age-limit for giving passes?

A.—I would put it at 40.

Q.—Are you in favour of granting new passes at all?

A.—I have already said that I am not.

Q.—You are of opinion that after these five years there will be no opium?

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THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—According to the present policy opium will continue to remain for those who are over 50?

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Q.—You say that lessees sell their shortweight opium to pass-holders whose rations have been reduced?

A.—I know it from a friend of mine.

Q.—The Government policy has up to date reduced 50 per cent. of the rations. If the consumers do not get used to the reduced quantity then how do you suppose that the habit will be given up?

A.—What cannot be cured must be endured. So when they find that they will not have further opium the habit itself will die. Now they are getting their craving supplied but if they cannot get it it would be a trophy.

Q.—Don't you think that smuggled opium will take the place of treasury opium?

A.—There is the Excise staff to prevent it.

Q.—Do you think that by increasing the Excise staff smuggling could be driven away from the province?

A.—The existing staff is quite sufficient to stop the evil when there is no shortweight sale. There will only be smuggling and the present staff is sufficient.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—It seems that you have no faith in these mahaldars?

A.—I have very little faith in them.

Q.—Do you suggest that the shops should be settled with educated people?

A.—I suggest it should be settled with people of approved character.

Q.—Do you think that people with sufficient education would come forward?

A.—May come. I have seen one B.A. offering for settlement.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Do you know a graduate lessee was convicted?

A.—There are black sheep in every fold.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q—Would you like Government servants to take charge of this selling?

A.—*Why not sell in tablet form?*

Q.—We had better leave that suggestion for a moment?

A.—In that case the idea of Government servants selling them may be tried. But I am not in a position to say if it would be a success.

Q—You have sufficient experience as a man of the public. Could you tell us whether this policy should be continued or the whole opium stopped immediately?

A.—*The policy has now run* on for five years and I would advise that it had better run on for the next five years. If you stop suddenly it may affect the revenue also. Let me be plain though, personally I should consider that it should be stopped at once. But it is the policy of Government to ration the consumption annually and, therefore, I recommend that it may continue.

THE CHAIRMAN :—Do you think that we shall be more ssful by stopping at once or by going on like this for the five years?

A.—I do not think it would not be successful But I think people should have an opportunity of gradually bringing n their ration.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI—

Q.—You are perhaps aware that a fairly large number of dicts have been compelled to give up the habit on account of onomic position?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In some cases they have reduced their rations considerbly?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Would you not take advantage of this situation and stop the opium habit?

A.—Yes the situation has already come to help us. After all I think we had better take advantage of it.

Q.—Again supposing we wait for the next five years is there not a danger of the economic condition bettering and the people would be tempted to go back? So I am asking you this question. We have been asked to review the whole position. Would you not rather advise us by telling us definitely which you prefer?

A.—I am now between the horns of a dilemma. Considering that the economic situation is there. I think if the opium is stopped the future will be bright. So I shall now modify my views to the extent that this should be stopped at once taking advantage of the worldwide economic depression.

No. 26.

Next the Committee examined GAURI KANTA TALUKDAR, B.L., Pleader.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q.—You say that the policy is a success? In what way is it a success?

A.—I call it a success, because the quantity of opium has been much reduced. It has left no evil effect on the people.

Q.—Has it prevented the younger generation from taking opium?

A.—Certainly. They cannot think of having opium any more. When they have come to know of this policy they shal have to think thrice before they think of opium. Therefore, i has stopped their temptation.

Rai Bahadur NILAMBAR DATTA :—Do you mean to say that it has checked the spread of the habit?

A.—Certainly, it has checked its progress amongst the younger generation. Not only that; even intending consumers have been stopped and discouraged. Even addicts have given it up and in some cases at least have brought down the rations. These things are being voluntarily done.

The CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Have you personally come across men who were inveterate addicts that gave it up?

A.—Yes. During the Non-co-operation in 1921 I had to work in many mauzas. I approach many people and I am glad to say that many people have given it up. Some of them have taken to it again but their number is very very small.

Q.—Supposing Government say that they are determined to root out this habit and say that no more opium will be available to persons below the age of 50, do you think that public opinion will be behind Government and the public also would come forward to help Goverment in preventing smuggling?

A.—While the public will be with the Government in all this, I do not see what the public could do in preveting smuggling. The first thing is to prevent smuggling at the root, at places from where the opium comes. That ought to be done by the Government of India.

Q.—You mean in the States?

A.—I think a strict watch should be kept if the Princes will not co-operate.

Q.—You realise that it is very difficult to know all the routes by which the smugglers come. They may take one route today and another another day.

A.—I appreciate the difficulty. What I say is first the manufacture of opium in the provinces should be stopped. After all, all over India it is British Government. They can check it in Cooch Behar or in Marwar.

Q.—You are making the question too big?

A.—I do not consider that this Committee is a small matter. You can make recommendations to the Assam Government and the Assam Government can move the Government of India. Another thing is that it depends upon the will of the Government. They must be determined that the habit should be stopped at any cost because it is an evil. They must see to it that the opium is not had even though the consumer is prepared to high prices.

Q.—That is begging the question. How is it to be done?

That the Government can do. ow we have got but a very mild type of legislation. If this pushed a little more and if opium-eaters are punished, as I lieve those with illicit possession of opium are punished, I do t think it can exist. Of course provision will be made for ose that are to have it for medical reasons. My position is at I would penalise the opium-eaters equally with the possessors opium.

Q.—Any more suggestions?

A.—There can be propaganda work by means of hand bills and literature describing the pernicious effects of opium; leaflets in vernacular containing similar articles so that the information may reach everybody and be understood by them; Government officers could advise and if necessary might preach amongst the public about the evil effects of opium. Also Government should encourage the public to preach against opium-eating without resorting to picketing. I am certain there are lots of people who would come forward to do it.

Q.—Is there any bar now?

A.—I consider there is. People think that they will be arrested [illegible] That is the reason why honest people [illegible] people and some go to the length of [illegible] ent is honestly wanting to radicate

Q.—If this policy is continued, after five years there will be no more treasury opium except for those over 50 years. Do you consider that there will then be a volume of public opinion to back up Government and to prevent smuggling?

A.—I say that a lot of people will do their utmost. The whole of Assam will be behind Government in fighting smuggling in two ways. First by inducing people not to take opium and secondly by trying to help Government in the matter of smuggling. I can tell you that public are very anxious to help Government. But now they cannot do it. I have good reasons for thinking so.

Q.—Do you think then that the public will help and smuggling will stop?

A.—It will stop and it must stop.

Q.—Do you think that some members of the public will no be as corrupt as the Excise staff is supposed to be corrupt now?

A.—The assumption probably is that there are some members of the public with whose connivance opium would be smuggled in. I am sorry I cannot agree with that assumption. I am quite certain, even if the present policy be continued, or even if the whole opium is stopped at once, smuggling and corruption will remain to a certain degree. I am quite certain that at all times there will be some smugglers bringing opium and some people trying to take opium. But that would be absolutely insignificant.

Q.—Do you think that a member of the public will dare to come and give evidence against a smuggler?

A.—Certainly. Even the smugglers are not such dangerous people as the bad livelihood men. Also the smugglers would be an eye sore to the people because they only are getting money while others are not. There may, however, be some places, where the people are callous. But I do not consider this will be the state of affairs throughout the province.

Q.—You are a member of the Bar. I would like to ask a question which I hope you will not take amiss. Will it not be helpful if the pleaders will not take up cases and defend the smugglers?

A.—Whether the pleaders take up the case on behalf of the smugglers or not, there is a provision of law that no innocent person should be punished. That is the main principle of justice and one cannot be sure that all the smugglers that come to court are culprits. If anyone will give such a guarantee then I believe the pleaders will not take up defending the smugglers. Where is the sanctity in justice if innocent people will have no chance of defending themselves?

Q.—That is when the man arrested is actually innocent. Are there not cases where there may be some doubts lurking in the minds of the pleaders that after all they may be defending those who may not be innocent?

A.—There may be such cases.

Q.—If he offers a large sum of money you will try your best to save a smuggler, won't you?

A.—Even in cases when he pays in lump gold you cannot save him if he is proved a culprit. It all depends upon the fact whether the man is a real culprit and whether he is really guilty. If the Excise officers cannot prove their case, the man is innocent and he must be free.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Even a real culprit if he has the legal help in defending himself is at times acquitted?

A.—Is it desirable that witnesses should not be cross-examined and the accused convicted?

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—Can you as lawyers combine and say that you would not defend a certain class of accused?

A.—We are not allowed to say so and we ought not to say so.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Is there any force in the argument advanced by some people who say that Government and their staff do not get any help from the public?

A.—Supposing there is nobody coming forward to help the police. Will that be a reason for the police to say that they will not keep peace and order? So the Excise officers are bound to secure the co-operation of the public. If they fail then there is something wrong in the way they seek public co-operation. It is for the Government to find it out and rectify.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA.—You agree generally with the views expressed by Mr. Bardaloi before this Committee?

A.—I cannot agree with him in some answers.

Q.—Generally in the matter of the continuation of the present policy and the prohibition of opium?

A.—I shall be glad to answer your questions if you put them one by one.

Q.—You have deposed from your experience in Kamrup only?

A.—I shall be able to tell you as regards any particular matter you have in mind if you put me a question on that.

Q.—As regards the unregistered opium-eaters?

A.—I have not said anything about the unregistered opium-eaters.

Q.—As regards bringing them into the registers those that are needy?

A.—I have spoken about them in my statement and I have nothing here in evidence.

Q.—Is that reply based on your personal experience?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have given the opinion that the registers should not be opened even to needy persons?

A.—I say that opium should be altogether stopped. I should be glad if the Government stop it at once.

Q.—You are against opening the registers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You base your opinion on your experience in Kamrup?

A.—I have gathered my experience not only from what I have seen of the people of Kamrup but also from seeing that the position of the people in the whole province is a result of this evil. I have actually seen people being ruined in all districts.

Q.—Take it for granted that in the Lakhimpur district there are lots of opium-eaters and they pay heavily up to Rs. 8 for the surplus opium. That causes great hardship to them and they are being ruined. Take it for granted that it is a fact.

A.—I am very sorry for those people who pay high rates for their opium. I am also very sorry for the Government that has not taken effective steps to stop this and save the people from being exploited. I shall also be very much more sorry if this Committee does not emphatically make the recommendation to Government to put a stop to this smuggling. If smuggled opium is sold at Dibrugarh at Rs. 8 it speaks much against Government and they ought to wake up now at least.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:-

Q.—Does it speak against the people of Dibrugarh?

A.—That goes without saying.

Sirs, you may take it from me that smuggling will go on eternally and it would be larger than it is at present.

Q.—You say that smuggling will go on?

A.—Yes, eternally and with greater force.

Q.—Would it be wise for the Assam Government to frame prohibitory legislation now when no opium passes are required in the neighbouring provinces?

A.—That is the reason why Assam Government should altogether prohibit it. Other people may manufacture poison and send it to Assam. In Cooch Behar I heard that they manufacture opium. Let Cooch Behar and Bengal take care of themselves. For ourselves, let us see that it does not enter here.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Supposing that smugglers are punished in such a way as to ruin them altogether and then they are deported ?

A.—If other methods fail, probably they shall have to be treated like *Goondas* in Bengal.

Q.—As a member of the Bar do you mean to say that deterrent punishment would check it ?

A.—Yes. It must also be possible to keep opium from the people. There should be no opium shop and no facility for the people to buy. Then the habit will die, as fire is extinguished for want of fuel.

No. 27.

The Committee next examined SRIJUT AMBIKA GIRI ROY CHAUDHURY, General Secretary, Assamiya Sanga Rakshini Sabha.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You think that the Assam Government is not in favour of abolishing the opium habit. Why do you say that ?

A.—I have little doubt about it.

Q.—The Government have started this ten per cent. cut and that they have been following till now. The object is to ensure, even as they have declared, that after the full ten years are run out there will be no more opium except for the aged. Why do you suspect their *bona fides* ?

A.—My doubt arises from the fact that without giving full effect to their declared policy they should have started all this enquiry and appointed a Committee to enquire on this very matter after five years only have gone by.

Q.—You are looking at it the wrong way. The reason why a Committee was found necessary was because some matters have crept in during these five years which the Government justifiably apprehended might defeat the policy that they have launched. That is the only reason why this Committee is here and, after all, even this enquiry is in furtherance of the policy which they want to be sure is made successful. So to find out means so that the policy may not be defeated it is but natural they should take all precautions. Again you must remember that in a year or two you will have your own Government. Now that I have explained the situation I hope you will not any more suspect the *bona fides* of Government.

A.—As a public man I should say that the Government have taken a wrong path if their sincere object was to eradicate the evil. Instead of getting at the root of the problems that confront them they have caught hold of a branch. This will not solve their difficulty.

Q.—What is the root?

A.—Government knows fully well that the use of opium has eaten to the vitals of the Assamese people. Knowing this it is their sincere duty to save the people from this evil. But without going to the root, namely total prohibition, by enacting a law immediately to that effect, what is the necessity for Government to appoint all these Committees? That action is questionable.

Q.—I should emphasise the importance of not dealing with the matter from that standpoint. We are non-officials who have been appointed by the Council.

I want, however, to clear your mind of the idea that Government is not willing to abolish this opium habit. For what is the Government now? It consists in this matter of the Excise Minister who gives advice to the Governor; and the Minister himself is influenced by the Council and he is bound to follow the wishes of the Council. The Council again is composed of the representatives of the people. So in this matter when you say Government you mean only the Council. We represent the Council and we have expressed the desire that this habit should be eradicated altogether. We are trying to find ways and means to make the policy successful and not a failure as in America the prohibition policy has been. So we want to find out whether in reality the existence of smuggling, as it is supposed to exist, will defeat the policy. If you can help us with your advice in this respect we shall be very glad indeed. But leave out the suspicion in regard to Government.

A.—Of course the Council is really composed of the elected representatives of the people. But sometimes it is seen that some elected members do otherwise than according to the wishes of the people. However, I do not mean any reflection on any one. To come to the question put to me.

Smuggling does exist in the province. But this is not the way, I think, of stopping smuggling. Recently the Government of India Opium Report has come out and it shows that the Government of India also is pressing to get rid of this before 1935.

Q.—That is regarding smoking of opium, not opium-eating. That is in accordance with the wishes of the League of Nations regarding smoking.

A.—I think I can give you a suggestion here. If opium is supplied free of cost from the Government treasury, then no smuggling will remain.

Q.—Do you suggest that opium should be given gratis to opium-eaters?

A.—Yes and the policy of the ten per cent. cut followed side by side. That will stop smuggling.

Q.—Just as medicine is given from dispensaries ?

A.—Yes. Then the smugglers will not be able to make a profit and they would not come here. As regards the unregistered consumers I do not think there are unregistered consumers in Assam. If there are such people I would have known because I come in contact with all sorts of people. I do not know the price of smuggled opium.

Q.—Do you mean that if opium is distributed freely then the smugglers will not come in ?

A.—They will not come in.

Q.—You suggest this for those who are already in the register ?

A.—Yes I have said that there are no unregistered consumers. But let me be clear. If the intention of Government was to stop smuggling, then I say this free distribution of opium would meet the fear of smugglers. But I am for total prohibition of opium at once.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—Supposing Government do not accept your recommendation of total prohibition immediately. Then are you in favour of continuing this 10 per cent. reduction policy ?

A.—I shall agree to this if I can be sure that Government will remain sincere to the policy for the next five years.

Q.—So in a manner you will agree ?

A.—I have no other alternative.

Q.—Do you think that by continuing this cut there will be more opium smuggled into the district in which you are interested ?

A.—I have given an answer. I think smuggling will disappear.........

Q.—I do not want a long reply. Supposing we continue this policy. Do you think that smuggling will increase ?

A.—It will decrease if opium is given to the registered consumers.

Q.—Do you know if the present pass-holders whose rations are being cut down, they supplement it from the mahaldars or from the smugglers ?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Or is it that you do not know ?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Have you given your statement as the Secretary of the Sabha ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you an Executive Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has this statement been approved by the Executive Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any proceedings book ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you noted in the proceedings book that this statement has been approved by them ?

A.—Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN :—How many members are there ?

A.—There are many branches throughout the whole of Assam.

Q.—How many members will there be in all ?

A.—Till now nearly 2,000. I may say that in my statement I am backed up by the whole Assamese nation.

Q.—You are in favour of total prohibition altogether. And your position is that the other arguments you have produced are simply what you think of the problem from the Government side, otherwise you do not mean that opium should be distributed free ?

A.—That is the correct reading of my evidence.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—What is your idea of the mahaldars ?

A.—Now and then I read from the papers and also friends say that mahaldars are not so honest.

Q.—What is your idea of the Excise staff ? Are they doing their duties honestly ?

A.—It is a very hard thing to say.

Q.—But you have said many things against Government ?

Q.—... about the Golaghat Excise staff ?

A.—I have personally seen about the Golaghat Excise staff ? Everyone knows that one Tanu Singh has been dismissed.

Q.—You say that they are corrupt ?

A—I do not like to go so far. Opium is such a bad thing that whoever comes in contact with it becomes corrupt.

Q.—You get no assistance from the public ?

A.—They do not want to be dragged in and they do like to come and give evidence.

Q.—At least they do not stand in your way ?

A.—No, I have never said that.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You suggested that the only means of checking smuggling and shortweight would by removing the demand ?

A.—That is one.

Q.—And give opium to those who want it. Then you say there will be no smuggling, no demand and no shortweight ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I am asking whether the present policy is a failure ?

A.—It is partly a failure.

Q.—That failure consists in the fact that it has created a demand which is being supplied by smugglers and by short-sales ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And in order to do away with that failure you say that Government should remove the demand ?

A.—My advice is not to remove but I am asking you to consider these difficulties also.

Q.—Do you want to remove the demand ?

A.—If you want to check smuggling you should remove it.

Q.—Do you think that the object of the Government is to prevent smuggling and not to stamp out the opium habit ?

A.—To do away with the habit.

Q.—You consider the present policy has been a failure because the smugglers are supplying opium ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And in order to meet that would you like to remove the demand ?

A.—That is one way.

Q.—By supplying the demand we get one effective method of doing away with the smuggling ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But if you go supplying the demand how you can do away with opium and stamp out the evil ?

A.—Yes, if you restrict the age, you can stop it after a few years. If you say that below the age of 40 there will be no passes issued you can do away with this evil in say 25 years.

Q.—Or is it that you do not know?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Have you given your statement as the Secretary of the Sabha?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you an Executive Committee?

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Q.—What is your idea of the Excise staff? Are they doing their duties honestly?

A.—It is a very hard thing to say.

Q.—But you have said many things against Government?

A.—I have personally seen about the Golaghat Excise staff? Everyone knows that one Tanu Singh has been dismissed.

Q.—You say that they are corrupt?

A—I do not like to go so far. Opium is such a bad thing that whoever comes in contact with it becomes corrupt.

Q.—Do you think that you too, will, become corrupt if you are Excise Superintendent or Inspector or a mahaldar ?

A.—I will not accept a post unless it be definitely to eradicate the evil.

Q.—Are you in favour of total prohibition at once ?

A.—Yes. Because if you keep it on for five years there is chance of new addicts coming in. Therefore I favour prohibition at once.

No. 28.

Next the Committee examined DHADHIRAM DHULANG, Kaibarta, Kukurmara, Saigaon Mauza.

He deposed as follows :—

I am 50 years of age. I am taking opium for the last 1½ years. I have got no license. I have got no opium now with me. I take one *rati* per day. I purchase my requirements from other pass-holders. I applied for pass but I was refused a pass. I am trying to give it up and I like not to take opium. But temptation is great and I am taking it now. I took opium first as I suffered from dysentery I had business in timber and I am also a cultivator. I said that I get my requirement from other pass-holders and I pay Rs 2 a tola. I get my supply from my father-in-law Anandh, from my son-in-law Matharam, from Khukhiran and from Jayaram.

I applied for a pass in March last and addressed it to the Superintendent. I filed the petition for opium with him when he was at Saigaon on tour. I received no reply. It must have been rejected.

HIDHIRAM GAONBURA, Kaibartha, Jiakur :—

I am over 50 now. I am taking opium for the last 20 or 30 years. I have got a *patta* for 3 tolas now. From the beginning I get 3 tolas and my ration was not reduced on account of my old age. There are no opium-eaters without passes in my village.

NAURAM, Kaibartha:—

I belong to Jakul and am above 50 years old. I have been taking opium for the last 15 years. I have 3 tolas in my pass and I am still getting three tolas. There are no opium-eaters without passes that I know of.

Q.—Or is it that you do not know ?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Have you given your statement as the Secretary of the Sabha ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you an Executive Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Has this statement been approved by the Executive Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any proceedings book ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you noted in the proceedings book that this statement has been approved by them ?

A.—Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN :—How many members are there ?

A.—There are many branches throughout the whole of Assam.

Q. –How many members will there be in all ?

A.—Till now nearly 2,000. I may say that in my statement I am backed up by the whole Assamese nation.

Q.—You are in favour of total prohibition altogether. And your position is that the other arguments you have produced are simply what you think of the problem from the Government side, otherwise you do not mean that opium should be distributed free ?

A.—That is the correct reading of my evidence.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :–What is your idea of the mahaldars ?

A.—Now and then I read from the papers and also friends say that mahaldars are not so honest.

Q.—What is your idea of the Excise staff ? Are they doing their duties honestly ?

A.—It is a very hard thing to say.

Q.—But you have said many things against Government ?

A.—I have personally seen about the Golaghat Excise staff ? Everyone knows that one Tanu Singh has been dismissed.

Q.—You say that they are corrupt ?

A—I do not like to go so far. Opium is such a bad thing that whoever comes in contact with it becomes corrupt.

Q.—Do you think that you too will become corrupt if you Excise Superintendent or Inspector or a mahaldar ?

A.—I will not accept a post unless it be definitely to eradi-e the evil.

Q.—Are you in favour of total prohibition at once ?

A.—Yes. Because if you keep it on for five years there is nce of new addicts coming in. Therefore I favour prohibi-n at once.

). 28.

Next the Committee examined DHADHIRAM DHULANG, aibarta, Kukurmara, Saigaon Mauza.

He deposed as follows :—

I am 50 years of age. I am taking opium for the last 12 ars. I have got no license. I have got no opium now with me. take one *rati* per day. I purchase my requirements from her pass-holders. I applied for pass but I was refused a pass. am trying to give it up and I like not to take opium. But mptation is great and I am taking it now. I took opium rst as I suffered from dysentery. I had business in timber and am also a cultivator. I said that I get my requirement from her pass-holders and I pay Rs. 2 a tola. I get my supply rom my father-in-law Ananda, from my son-in-law Matharam, rom Khukhiram and from Jayaram.

I applied for a pass in March last and addressed it to the Superintendent. I filed the petition for opium with him when he was at Saigaon on tour. I received no reply. It must have been rejected.

BIDHIRAM GAONBURA, Kaibartta, Jiakur :—

I am over [illegible] now. I am taking opium for the last 20 or [illegible] years. I have got a patta for 3 tolas now. From the beginning I get 3 tolas and my [illegible] was [illegible] on account of my old age. There are no opium-eaters without passes in my village.

NAURAM, [illegible]—

I belong to [illegible] and am above [illegible] years old. I have been taking opium for the last [illegible] years. [illegible] and I am still [illegible]. There are no [illegible] without passes that I know of.

KALI KEUA, KAIBARTA :—

My age is 40 and I am taking opium for the past 10 or 12 years. I am getting four tolas from the beginning and I am still having 4 tolas. There are no unregistered opium-eaters. (The age in the pass is put down as 50). When there was no license I used to take 4 or 5 tolas and sometimes as much as I can get.

I did not sell any portion of my ration to anybody. Even if anybody asked I did not give. My wife does not eat opium. Nor do my children eat opium. I smoke and I smoke alone. I never eat opium but I smoke it. I buy no opium from outside.

The Committee then adjourned to the next day.

No. 29.

Tuesday, the 11th July 1933.

The Committee examined RAI SAHIB D. C. BARUA, retired Deputy Superintendent of Police and Honorary Magistrate.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—

Q.—You have not submitted a statement ?

A.—No.

Q.—You have seen the questionnaire ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is your idea of the present Government opium policy ?

A.—I think it is a partial success.

Q.—In what way has it been a success ?

A.—In the beginning when the ten per cent. cut was introduced, I can say from personal experience that, people did not realise the full implications of the policy; but when the cuts were being made they were not satisfied with the reduced rations and they had recourse to opium from other sources. Smuggling took place either from one shop to another or from outside. I mean they got their reduced opium from other consumers or from others who made a saving from shortweight.

Q.—But not from foreign opium ?

A.—I do not think the Assamese people had recourse to foreign opium. May be there have been rare cases.

Q.—You are speaking of this district?

A.—No, I am speaking of the whole of Assam, from Goalpara to North Lakhimpur district.

Q.—You are stationed in this district?

A.—I have been here for the last five years.

Q.—Where were you before?

A.—My home is in Dibrugarh town. That is the district where opium is mostly consumed by the agriculturist people?

Q.—Have you been to Tezpur?

A.—Not during this time. I had been there before

Q.—You stayed there for some time?

A.—I went there on business.

Q.—Did you hear anything of smuggling in the Darrang district?

A.—I should say that only one case came to my notice there. There may or may not be more, I am not certain

Q.—In your contact with people have you come across people who have actually given up the habit and not taken to it again after the introduction of this policy?

A.—That is a very difficult question. Specially the agriculturists; they have not given up. There are some rare cases where people have given it up by force.

Q.—What force is that? Is it the force of the policy?

A.—Not by the force of the policy. I mean by force of lectures and such other ways.

Q.—You mean they have been persuaded to give it up?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I want to know whether you know cases of such people?

A.—I have seen them, I cannot name them.

Q.—In what other way has this policy been successful?

A.—Giving up opium-eating is a very difficult task. In this generation people do know themselves what is good and what is bad. Still why do they take to these things? Because in their view they think they are getting some benefit out of it.

Q.—You said that the policy has been partially successful. I want to know in what other way you consider the policy has been successful?

A.—I have seen young people giving up the habit. I have seen a respectable man who was convicted not for any heinous offence but for causing grievous hurt. He was imprisoned and

convicted. I was then in charge of the jail and I know he gave up the habit in jail. But the difficulty is that on release he got his passage money and immediately purchased opium. He came back and said that he was feeling very happy. Ever since he was convicted, he complained, that he had no opportunity of taking opium all the four years in jail; and when he was now released he took opium and was very happy. His age was 3[illegible]

Q.—You do not know of anybody who have given up the habit and never took to it again?

A.—I have known some cases. But I cannot name them. I retired some five years ago after serving 30 years and now I cannot remember their names.

Q.—In what service were you?

A.—I passed the rank of the Assistant Sub-Inspector and became an Inspector and then a Deputy Superintendent of Police. I mixed with various sorts of people.

Q.—Have you heard of smuggling?

A.—When I was a Deputy Superintendent of Police I used to get telegrams saying that Marwari opium was being distributed. In one case, I received a telegram saying that a parcel said to contain country cloth had opium concealed in it. It had passed through several hands and the police and the Excise staff were on the alert. The man to whom it was addressed came to know of it somehow and he did not come and take delivery of the parcel. It was taken delivery of by the police and when opened it was found to contain 35 seers of opium. This might be in 1925 but I cannot be sure of it.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—*Do you mean the Khemani case?*

A.—I do not remember the name.

Q.—*Have you heard or known of any other case like that?*

A.—About three years ago there was smuggled opium brought here and it was detected by the Excise staff on its way to Shillong. I remember the case very well as I had to record a confession. There is also the Tezpur case.

Q.—Well the whole question is that only a small quantity is seized of what is supposed to be foreign opium. Could you tell us whether you have reason to suppose that that is the whole quantity that is being smuggled or there is a large quantity more that has gone undetected?

A.—On the whole I should say that smuggling of foreign opium has largely gone down.

Q.—For what reason?

A.—Since the introduction of the special staff who are on the alert.

Q.—Is it also due to trade depression?

A.—No, I do not think so. But it may also be due to that to a small extent. In the previous times they used to import not only by railways but also take it from place to place by country boats; I personally detected some boatmen with opium.

Q.—Was it foreign opium?

A.—I cannot be sure of that.

Q.—You cannot give us an idea how much contraband opium comes in?

A.—I cannot say. My opinion is, it is going down.

Examined by MR. DAWSON—

Q.—Suppose the cut is continued, I mean, for the next five years, do you think the demand for smuggled opium may increase?

A.—I do not think that foreign opium will come in. But I consider that if the cut is given effect to, smuggling from one shop to another may go on. The consumers will buy opium from the savings of the mahaldars by shortweight or from such other agency.

Q.—Then you admit that if the cut is continued there will be a demand from those who think the reduced ration is not sufficient?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You admit that the demand will be met by shortweight opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Not from outside?

A.—No.

Q.—You admit there will be a demand? But why do you say that it will not partly be met by outside opium?

A.—I have already said that smuggled opium is very rare and it has gone down.

MAULAVI ABDUL RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Why has it gone down?

A.—I have already explained that it is due to the activities of the special staff.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—Do you know that last month 9 seers of smuggled opium were found on the railway between Golakganj and Amingaon ?

A.—I have heard of a case of smuggled opium caught at Goalpara. But I do not know if that is the case.

Q.—Do you think there is a large number of opium consumers who have not got passes ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it a good number or a small number ?

A.—As regards that I have no knowledge.

Q.—Assuming that there is a certain number of unregistered consumers, would you re-open the registers for them to come and take passes ?

A.—I would.

Q.—If you do not do so what would be the effect ?

A.—The effect would be that these people would purchas opium from the other consumers or from those that make a sur plus by selling shortweigh.

Q.—But they would not take to smuggled opium ?

A.—No, I do not think so.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—On this question of smuggled opium, you just to Mr. Dawson that if the cut is continued the demand for opiu will still continue ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is going to happen if the treasury opium is c out altogether and ceases to exist. If the cut continues you alise that treasury opium would go out in five years; but th the demand will still remain. Where will the consumers get from ?

A.—From some other source. Perhaps then they will smuggled opium and they may get treasury opium from other p vinces. They may also take to poppy cultivation. Anyhow th will get some sort of supply.

Q.—The only other possible supply is smuggled opium poppy ?

A.—If the treasury opium stops altogether they may take these two methods.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Do you not know that due to the economic depression many consumers have given up the habit ?

A.—I do not think so. For instance I will cite the case of a woman in Palasbari. She is a wretched woman; she has no husband and she has no cultivation. For the sake of getting opium she travelled all the way from Palasbari to Gauhati paying six annas for the bus hire and another six annas for the return She purchases opium from an outside source. She was found out and sentenced and I tried the case. I give the case as an instance to show that these consumers must get their ration somehow at any cost.

Q.—Have you got other instances ?

A.—Yes

Q.—Do you know how many consumers there are in this district ?

A.—No, I have no idea of this district.

Q.—How many are there in the Lakhimpur district.

A.—I think more than two-thirds of the registered consumers are unregistered consumers

Q.—So far as Lakhimpur is concerned ?

A.—Yes both Lakhimpur and Sibsagar.

Q.—How do you say it is two-thirds ?

A.—Because I have seen people taking opium for smoking and eating.

Q.—On what facts do you come to that conclusion ?

A.—In many cases I have seen people approaching other consumers for opium

Q.—In how many cases ?

A.—I cannot give you the number of cases. It is so late now after I have retired.

Q.—Can you give the quantity saved by shortweight ?

A.—I cannot. They used to save by shortweight and that is my personal experience.

Q.—Can you give the quantity of smuggled opium in the province ?

A.—No During the present year up to date I have heard of one case in Goalpara and one in the Darrang district : these are the two.

Q.—What is the quantity saved by shortweight sale ?

A.—It may be in some cases 4 annas and in some cases two annas per tola.

Q.—Do you know if the whole savings in Lakhimpur were consumed in that district alone?

A.—No. It may go to other districts also.

Q.—On what facts do you base that statement that two-thirds of the consumers must be unregistered consumers?

A.—I know of many taking opium without their names being on the register. I have seen them.

Q.—From that are you able to say that the number will be two-thirds?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can it not be one-third?

A.—It will be more than that. It may be one-third to half.

Q.—You have no idea of Kamrup district?

A.—I have no local knowledge of the Kamrup district.

Q.—You have not also heard that many people, due to the temperance movement, have given up the habit of opium-eating?

A.—It may be temporary.

Q.—Have you not come across any men who have given up the habit?

A.—I know many people who promise that they would not take opium but they again go and take opium.

Q.—We had before us some veteran opium-eaters who said they have given up the habit altogether?

A.—I have not come across any such cases.

Q.—Are you in favour of doing away with the opium passes in this province?

A.—I do not think so. I am not in favour of that suggestion.

Q.—Why?

A.—Assam is a damp place and the agriculturists believe that they need opium. They feel that they are getting some benefit.

Q.—Do you know the early history of Assam and there was no habit formerly?

A.—I know the early history but there was this habit of opium-taking even then. It is not the upcountry people that have introduced opium-eating. I have heard from the older generations that there used to be opium-eating in Assam in previous days. If you go into the interior of the Lakhimpur districts and mix with the *Mataks* you will understand that. We read in the papers that it has been introduced by up country people.

Q.—Before that the agriculturists did not know anything of opium ?

A.—What I hear is that even before 130 years, opium was the practice of the noble men as well as the agriculturists of Assam. They also used to take it for bowel complaints and chronic dysentery and not merely for pleasures. And you will be astonished to hear that now the younger generation say that they are taking opium for various other reasons.

Q.—What reasons ?

A.—I cannot mention them here.

Q.—You may mention it here ?

A.—You go to the interior of the Doom Dooma tea gardens, the younger generation, you will hear, take opium for increasing the sexual power. All those who are suffering from impotency say they find a benefit in opium.

Q.—Do you like that this opium habit should go on in this province ? Or would you stamp it out ?

A.—I do not think it should be stamped out.

Q.—Is it beneficial to the agriculturists ?

A.—They are exposed to the hot sun, to the rains ; they cannot get filtered water. This opium brings them some relief.

Q.—Do you advocate this should be given free ?

A.—I do not mean to say it should be given free. Those who are in the habit of taking opium, they should be allowed to take opium.

Q.—According to you whoever wants opium should be given opium ?

A.—Not so. Those who are suffering from diseases, those addicts who are old and those who cannot do without opium, these should be given opium.

Q.—Would you limit the age ?

A.—I think 40 should be the limit. It should be allowed very rarely in cases below 40 and only if they say that they get benefit.

Q.—And those 15 and upto the age of 40 if they say they get benefit would you give them ?

A.—I said 40 years. But in rare cases below that age where a man is addicted to it and cannot give it up he should be given.

Q.—Supposing a boy of 15 years says that he has been ad·dicted to it and asks for opium because he could not do without it?

A.—A boy 15 has no income. How can he afford it?

Q.—Would it not be beneficial for him?

A.—That is a matter to be ascertained by medical evidence.

Q.—Then you won't allow without a doctor's certificate?

A.—I would fix a 40 years age limit, and below that age I would not give without a doctor's certificate.

Q.—Your position therefore is this. You think that the agriculturists do want opium? but they should not get it if they are under 40 if the doctor does not certify?

A.—Yes.

Examined by Rai Bahadur NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You are here since the last five years?

A.—Since my retirement. Rather I retired here after taking leave preparatory to retirement.

Q.—Do you agree that opium is not at all a problem in thi district?

A.—Not like Upper Assam.

Q.—And in view of the fact that climate here is different the temperament of the people here, the experience of thi district, I mean Kamrup, are all different, all these would not b a safe guide for districts in Upper Assam?

A.—I do not think there should be any more safeguide i this district than in Upper Assam. People want a stimulant an opium is the cheapest that they can have.

Q.—The people in Gauhati also have realised that it is th cheapest stimulant and they need it?

A.—It is the cheapest stimulant and there are no su habitual consumers in this district like there are in Upper Assa Because they take only when they need it.

Q.—It would not be a safe guide for us to consider th problem for Upper Assam from the experience in Kamr because in Upper Assam they consume heavily. You have ve much greater experience of Upper Assam and you have be here only for five years?

A.—In this district I have known that only those who ne it go and take opium.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Do you mean that the people here have understood that opium is an evil habit and the Upper Assam people do not yet realise that it is a bad habit?

A.—Yes. The people here are more educated and have more understanding than the people of Upper Assam.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—It is said that the registered opium eaters whose rations have been cut on account of the ten per cent. cut policy supplement their requirements from other sources?

A.—That is what I already said.

Q.—And that they pay an abnormal price for the same?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you say approximately what they pay?

A.—The Government rate is Rs. 2. I have known of a case where the opium-eater gave Rs. 2-8 or Rs 2-12.

Q—Do you know that they were paying more than that before and they are paying less now on account of the economic depression?

A.—They must take opium and they do not mind for the economic depression.

Q—As the money market is not easy now they do not get money. Is that the reason they are paying less because we have evidence before us that they were paying abnormal rates for opium?

A.—Those who are accustomed to it must take opium at any cost.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—You were speaking about the woman that came all the way from Palasbari. What rate did she pay?

A.—She paid Rs. 2-12.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—In view of the fact that the registered consumers whose rations have been cut supplement their rations from other sources by paying high rates would you not rather like to stop cutting and help these poor people?

A.—At least for those of 50 and above I do not recommend any cut.

Q.—You are in favour of continuing the cut?

A.—No I do not want to continue the cut.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—For whom, for all?

A.—For those whose ages exceed 50 years.

Q.—What about those below that age of 50?

A.—When they reach 50 and if they cannot avoid it in their cases they should be allowed to take opium.

Q.—What about those below 50?

A.—The present cut should continue and the cut should not be more than that.

Q.—Are you fully aware of the present policy?

A.—I am not fully aware of it.

Q.—The present policy is this. There will be a ten per cent. annual reduction and the object is to get rid of opium at the end of ten years except for those over the age of 50. This policy has been worked already for five years and Government have given passes for those over 50 years and their rations are not subjected to cut. For those below that age the rations are subjected to a ten per cent. cut each year and this annual cut has been going on for the last five years. Now do you think that those people whose rations have been cut feel great hardship and are supplementing their rations from other sources? And from your experience of the previous five years do you advise that the cut should be continued for the next five years for those below the age of 50?

A.—If you stop opium you cannot change their habit at once.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—But after five years they can change?

A.—From my experience people increase their doses every fifth year.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—My question is this. We have gone on for the last five years and we have another five years more. Would it be advisable to continue or to stop the cut now?

A.—I am not in favour of stopping the cut at all.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q —But would you make exceptions ?

A.—Yes.

Q —In what cases ?

A.—Those who are suffering from diseases or those who are ld and above 50 ?

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q —Are you aware that the opium mahaldars sell short-eight ?

A —Yes they dispose of it by secret sale.

Q.—To whom ?

A —To willing purchasers who engage in the traffic and to onsumers

Q.—Do they sell to registered consumers as well ?

A.—Not only registered consumers but to the others who eal in it.

Q —Have you any idea ?

A.—Yes They sell to registered consumers and to others who go on trafficking.

Q.—You are still of the opinion that the ten per cent. cut hould not be stopped ?

A.—I have always suggested there should be some exceptions.

Q —When you were in the Dibrugarh Sadr subdivision do you remember there were some riots at the opium shop at Chabua and also in other places for the mahaldars not being able to supply surplus opium to the unregistered consumers and then the cases were sent up and the accused were imprisoned ?

A —Yes.

Q —Do you remember the big looting case at Dhemaji for opium ?

A —Yes.

Q —You wanted now to continue the present cut policy ?

A —I did not say in all cases. I want that there should be no cut after the age of 50.

Q —Can you say if there are any good results of the policy ?

A.—The good results of the policy are that those who traffic in treasury opium or smuggled opium are

Q.—Do you know that since the introduction of the present policy opium offences have increased?

A.—Yes. They have increased and it is partly due to the work of the detective staff. When this was an additional work done by the police, the police could not make time to pay much attention to this particular subject. So the introduction of the present policy with increased staff has done good.

Q.—The offences have increased on account of the scarcity of opium, is it not?

A.—Yes, because illicit opium is now being largely detected

Q.—If opium is sold by Government agency do you conside it would be good for the public and the Government?

A.—Yes; you can sell in pill form.

Q.—Not by pills; let us confine to the present cake system?

A.—That will mean additional expense and it may affect the consumer as the price may be increased on account of the higher cost of production. I think the present mahaldari system is not bad and there may be more strict supervision.

MR E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—Is he honest?

A.—I do not think.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Can you say that there is a very strong public feelin against the opium habit?

A.—Yes there is, that is public opinion. I have seen it i the papers. In some cases I read in the papers that this habit not desirable. But I think that opium is needed by the agricu turists.

Q.—You do not admit that this is a bad habit?

A.—The educated people think so.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—You mean that among the educated people who general-ly do not take opium and who really cannot realise the so-called benefits of opium, it is considered bad?

A.—Yes.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—May I know why the educated classes think like that

A.—The educated classes are the classes who are not subjec to the diseases that are common among the agriculturists and are not fully aware of the difficulties of the agriculturists,

Q.—In your opinion are they right in their opinion?

A.—They may be right or they may be wrong. I consider that the agriculturists know better.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—*You are one of the educated class?*

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is your opinion?

A.—I think it is needed for the agriculturists who cannot afford all the amenities that the educated classes can command.

Maulavi. ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—You do not like them to give it up?

A.—My opinion is that those who feel it beneficial should get it.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI.—

Q.—Have you seen the Mymensingh settlers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are they not better labourers than the Assamese people? *Still they are not* opium eaters?

A.—That is not the only criterion.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—You have recommended that the registers should be opened to those who are unregistered. Do you think that it will not encourage the opium habit?

A.—You cannot avoid people taking opium secretly. All that you can do is you can try and stop smuggling as far as possible.

Q.—If you open the registers would smuggling be stopped?

A.—It will tend to disappear gradually.

Q.—You say that short-weight sale exists?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you got any *suggestions how to check it?*

A.—As regards short weight, I think, frequent visits are necessary to the shop. And more detective ideas should be introduced. The police may be asked to co-operate with the excise staff when the latter go to the villages.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI.—Q.—The statement you laid before us is based on your experiences of Upper Assam five years ago?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is before the introduction of the present policy of Government?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And you had no opportunity to see how the present policy has worked in Upper Assam?

A.—No.

Q.—And you say you have no experience of this district at all?

A.—I have no local experience.

Q.—All that you have deposed before us is a matter of opinion on the state of things you remember of Upper Assam?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You cannot say definitely that there are a large number of unregistered consumers?

A.—For the last five years I cannot say.

Q.—You know that registers were thrown open on two occasions previously and you cannot definitely say now whether there are still unregistered consumers?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—So the statement you made that there are two-thirds of the registered consumers as unregistered consumers cannot be your recent experience?

A.—For the last five years I cannot say.

Q.—On the whole you are of opinion that the policy that has been introduced by Government five years ago should be continued for the next five years?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Your idea is that ration of those over 50 should not be cut?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You will be glad to know that that is the present policy of the Government also. But for those under 50 you have advocated the cut?

A.—I entirely agree with the policy as regards those over 50. But for those below that age I do not advocate cut in all cases.

Q.—Yes, you have said that you would not have the cut for those who cannot do without opium on medical grounds?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Take a case that I will give you. Supposing a man of 5 comes and says I am 45 and I am an addict. Will you give him the opium that he wants?

A.—If you are going to reduce his rations he will manage to take opium from some other source.

Q.—In what cases would you make exception?

A.—Those who have some sort of bowel complaints or some such disease, those who have disabilities due to climate, those that are used to exposing themselves in the sun and rain and those who cannot avoid taking opium.

Q.—Now who will judge these applicants?

A.—They should produce a medical certificate in support.

Q.—It comes to this. If a person complains that he has illness in him and if he produces a medical certificate supporting what he says then you will give him?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Supposing he cannot produce a medical certificate or the medical certificate is against him?

A.—Such cases should be judged by circumstances.

Q.—What would you do?

A.—I will have local enquiries made where the medical opinion is against him. But when it is in favour of him I would not have any local enquiry.

Q.—Who will say that this is a question of life and death and that medical opinion is the best?

A.—Yes, it may be done by excise officers or the police officers by local investigation.

Q.—Your idea is that the number of opium offences has not increased but there are more detections because you have an excise staff who are solely employed on the work of detection?

A.—Opium offences have rather not decreased.

Q.—You base that opinion on statements about detections?

A.—No, I should say that the number of cases have not decreased and I say this from the number [illegible] ted.

Q.—Don't you see that it is only the detected cases that ar reported ?

A.—When a case is detected it is reported.

Q.—Formerly you did not hear of so many cases being d tected ?

A.—That is so.

Q.—But now you hear of the detected cases because there a special staff ?

A.—Yes, that was what I said.

Q.—That does not show that the offences have increased?

A.—No.

Q.—Have you heard of a case of 35 seers which came along with personal clothing ?

A.—I have not heard of such a case during the last five years.

Q.—You seem to be of the idea that opium is necessary fo the health of the agriculturist class ?

A.—Yes. Also for others who suffer from some sort o complaint and who derive any benefit from opium.

Q.—Don't you think that the opium-eating agriculturist ca not put in so much work as the non-opium eating agriculturist

A.—If you put in an opium-eating man without his opiu he does not turn cut so much work. He falls sick.

Q.—What troubles does he get ?

A.—Bowel complaints and other troubles according to age.

Q.—You seem to think also that climate has something to do with opium eating ?

A.—Not in all cases. What I hear from the people is that they want some sort of stimulant and opium is the cheapest of all.

Q.—You say that these agriculturists want some sort of sti mulant ?

A.—That is what they say.

Q.—If it is a stimulant that they want, why not liquor ?

A.—Originally they indulged in drinking and now they hav taken to opium.

Q.—Don't you see that it is only the detected cases that are reported?

A.—When a case is detected it is reported.

Q.—Formerly you did not hear of so many cases being detected?

A.—That is so.

Q.—But now you hear of the detected cases because there is a special staff?

A.—Yes, that was what I said.

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Q.—You seem to be of the idea that opium is necessary for the health of the agriculturist class?

A.—Yes. Also for others who suffer from some sort of complaint and who derive any benefit from opium.

Q.—Don't you think that the opium-eating agriculturist cannot put in so much work as the non-opium eating agriculturist?

A.—If you put in an opium-eating man without his opium he does not turn out so much work. He falls sick.

Q.—What troubles does he get?

A.—Bowel complaints and other troubles according to age.

Q.—You seem to think also that climate has something to do with opium eating?

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Q.—You say that these agriculturists want some sort of stimulant?

A.—That is what they say.

Q.—If it is a stimulant that they want, why not liquor?

A.—Originally they indulged in drinking and now they have taken to opium.

Q.—Would you like to hear of your son taking opium ?

A.—He does not have to do hard manual labour.

Q.—So you want the agriculturist labouring class to take opium ?

A.—That is what they want.

Q.—Have you consulted the doctor about the effects of opium ?

A.—Not during the last five years.

Q.—Have you experience in Digboi about the labouring class people ?

A.—There are fewer Assamese there.

No. 30.

The Committee next examined SRIJUT GOLAP CHANDRA CHAUDHURY, Mauzadar, Bethna.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN—the witness said :—

Srijut Gopinath Bardaloi asked me whether there were persons in my mauza who have actually given up the opium habit. I said yes. Then he asked me to give a list of their names and gave him the list. They have all given up opium on account of economic depression because they have no money. As smuggled opium is dearer than treasury opium I do not think that they are getting their supply from other sources. There are others besides those mentioned in the list. Whether they will take to the habit in future is more than I can say.

Examined by MR. DAWSON :—

I have got a pass for 4 tolas of opium a month and my age is about 60. Opium eaters in my mauza pay their land revenue all right. The Kachari people have been eating opium for a long time and I cannot say if they derive any benefit out of it. I would not like to give up my own opium and as long as I have money I shall take opium.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

My son is a graduate and I do not like his taking

No. 31.

SRIJUT KAMAKHYARAM BARUA, Pleader, Gauhati.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You were a Member of Legislative Council ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have taken a great deal of interest in this opium question ?

A.—I take some interest.

Q.—You are now a practising pleader in the Gauhati Bar ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have seen the questionnaire of the Committee ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you think of the present policy, has it been a success ?

A.—Yes. I am personally in favour of total immediate prohibition of opium. But so far as the Government policy is concerned I think it is better than what it was before.

Q.—Supposing immediate prohibition is not found workable. Do you think it is advisable to continue the present policy for the next five years ?

A.—Surely.

Q.—Then would there not be more smuggled opium ?

A.—My idea is that there was smuggling even before this prohibition policy started. Even now there is some smuggling going on. But I think this question of smuggling has been very much exaggerated and the quantity smuggled is not as much as the quantity suggested by the staff. It falls far short of the quantity that has been reduced by the cut policy.

Q.—Then you mean to say that many people who have had their rations cut in the pass have not resorted to illicit sources ?

A.—That is what I mean.

Q.—Don't you think that after 5 years when there will be no more opium allowed them, they would be tempted to obtain opium from some source ?

A.—It is always difficult to kill a habit but we have to do it. We have to save the people from this evil habit. Of course there would be some difficulty in the beginning.

Q.—Suppose we are not able to defeat smuggling, the people will still take to opium just the same ?

A.—It will be up to us to take stringent measures to prevent smuggling and stop the habit.

Q.—Have you any suggestions ?

A.—I think the present methods may be improved. There should be stricter supervision and the staff also may be strengthened if necessary.

Q.—Any more suggestions ?

A.—My idea is this Unless there is total prohibition, the evil will be there and the present set of opium-eaters will teach others to take to this habit.

Q —What do you mean by total prohibition ? Do you mean that opium should not be given to men below a certain age ?

A —Yes Unless they require on medical grounds.

Q.—The present policy is to allow opium without cut in the case of those over 50. Do you approve of that ?

A.—I would have prohibition irrespective of age.

Q —Under the present policy there are only 5 more years left and they will pass away soon. You say that opium should not be given to those who are old to allow them to pass their old age peacefully ?

A.—My experience is that even old people can give up the habit. They would suffer for 5 or 6 days and after that they will improve in their health.

Q.—Do you know of old people who have given up the habit ?

A.—Yes, I know. I met about 3 Kacharees in Boko who have given up the habit.

Q.—Have they not gone back to the habit ?

A.—I do not know now. I found they were improving in their health.

Examined by Mr. DAWSON :—

Q —The quantity of smuggled opium seized is comparatively small, a few seers every year, not very much. I admit that. But do you think that there is much more opium smuggled which is not detected ?

A.—Personally I have got no idea But I suppose probably the quantity not detected is more than the quantity detected.

Q.—Supposing I made an estimate of the quantity undetected and say that it is 50 times the quantity detected. Can you say whether I would be wrong ?

A.—I do not think it would be so much ?

Q.—What do you think it would be ?

A.—I have no exact idea. But in my opinion it cannot be more than 15 to 20 times the quantity detected.

Q.—The fact of the matter is that it is very difficult to say and both of us are conjecturing ?

A.—Yes.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—You take a great interest in this opium question ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what way ?

A.—As an Assamese it concerns me. When I was a member of the Assam Association we used to pass resolutions to take steps to check the habit. The number of opium-eaters is decreasing in our district and in other districts also. From my childhood I disliked this opium habit and in the Council also, I took part in the discussion and I have moved some resolutions.

Q.—Don't you think that this would cause a great deal of suffering immediately ?

A.—It will be for a few days only.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Do you admit that there are unregistered consumers ?

A.—I think there are.

Q.—Are there a very large number ?

A.—They would be very much smaller in number than the registered opium-eaters.

Q.—Do you like to open the registers and to bring them in ?

A.—Surely not, certainly not.

Q.—Why ?

A.—My idea is to prohibit opium totally.

Q.—Suppose it is not possible to prohibit opium totally, would you continue the policy for the next five years ?

A.—I would try and stop opium. Instead of increasing the number of consumers you should decrease. That is I suppose the policy of the Government and the Council.

Q.—You do not like to bring them into the register?

A.—Certainly not.

Q.—How to stop their continuing taking opium?

A.—If they purchase opium without license prosecute them.

Q.—Which would you prefer, prosecuting them or registering them?

A.—To prosecute them would be an act of mercy on these people.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—All that you have stated here is from your experience in Gauhati?

A.—As a matter of fact I know something of Upper Assam also. I frequent the Upper districts also. My idea is that opium is not good for any people, whether they live in Upper Assam or Lower Assam.

Q.—Apart from that what you have deposed now is from your experience of Kamrup?

A.—On what point do you mean, do you ask about the undesirability of taking opium?

Q.—I am asking about total prohibition?

A.—Yes. I advocate total prohibition because it would be best for the opium-eaters themselves.

Q.—Don't you think this is only a sentimental idea?

A.—Surely not. These people suffer a great deal in material discomfort. They lose their money and their all.

Q.—So *far as my district is concerned, the opium-eaters are* many. Do you preach temperance? Do you go into the villages?

A.—I used to but not now.

Q.—You have given it up altogether?

A.—Yes because I do not find it convenient for me for personal grounds. All the same I have not lost enthusiasm for it.

Q.—Are the people still anxious to hear these lectures in the interior of Kamrup?

A.—They are tired of lectures of any sort, as a matter of fact.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Do you think that short-weight sale exists?

A.—Yes

Q.—Have you got any suggestions to make to stop it?

A.—I cannot give any suggestion except that there should be better supervision and that in all cases punishments should be awarded.

Q.—What about the mahaldar system. Some say it should be abolished. What is your idea?

A.—My idea is to make opium available in medical shops from hospitals and dispensaries and pharmacies just as other poisonous drugs.

Q.—Do you think that this mahaldari system is not working well?

A.—In the present circumstances it is not working well.

Q.—Suppose total prohibition is not possible. You say there are some unregistered consumers. What to do with them?

A.—I have already stated that except better supervision and stricter methods of detection, I have nothing else to suggest.

Q.—Do you not think that the present staff is sufficient to deal with the situation in the matter of detection?

A.—I have not got any clear idea on the point.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Do you hear that there is a large amount of smuggling in the province?

A.—There is some smuggling but it is not as much as it is supposed to be by some people.

Q.—You say that it is not so large as to be a menace to the success of the present policy?

A.—Surely not to that extent.

Q.—What are your reasons why you would not open the registers to the unregistered consumers?

A.—Because that will only go on adding to the number in the registers already. Whereas our object is to reduce the number of opium-eaters and to do away with the opium-eater completely.

Q.—Do you think that if the registers are opened from time to time there is a further danger of non addicts coming into the register?

A.—Certainly there would be more people taking to the habit. If the habit is killed there would be no smuggling and no shortweight.

MR. DAWSON :—You say that new addicts would come in if the register is opened and there would be more smuggling. But if you bring them into the register they would all get excise opium from Government and I should have thought there would be less smuggling ?

A.—I shall explain in a moment. These unregistered opium-eaters are there because there are registered opium-eaters and they are in their company. For instance in England there are no opium-eaters because there is not the habit. When you have got some opium-eaters, there would also be another batch of unregistered opium-eaters in a few years' time.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Your objection to the ten per cent. cut is that it fosters the habit and it gives a lease of life to the opium eaters ?

A.—I cannot say that it fosters the habit but it does give a new lease of life.

Q.—This policy was adopted by the Council and was the result of a promise made by Government ?

A.—Whoever is responsible for the policy, it is there.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—In what year were you in the Council ?

A.—In the second Council in 1924.

No. 32.

The Committee then examined MR. PAMPA SINGH, retired Extra Assistant Commissioner.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—In your opinion is the present policy of Government a success or not ?

A.—I consider that although there has been a reduction of about 50 per cent. in consumption as shown in the passes, I do not think it is all real reduction entirely. The reduction in consumption so far as it has gone may partially be due to the policy. But then it has given rise to various other malpractices. On the whole I should say that we should stop at this stage. Better arrangements should be made and the short-weight sales stopped.

Q.—Why do you want the reduction stopped ? Do you consider that, if continued, the objects of the policy would be endangered ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In what way?

A.—This has given rise to shortweight.

Q.—Do you consider that shortweights would endanger the policy?

A.—Shortweight will not but smuggling from outside will endanger. The more you cut the more will be the danger of its being supplemented from outside. I see there has been an increase in the detection of contraband opium. In the year 1925-26 there were 26 seers detected. Thereafter it has been doubled and recently it was as much as 77 seers. Of course in 1931 and 1932 the detections have been less but that is probably due to the economic depression.

Q.—We are in a great difficulty to find out about how much smuggled opium is coming into the province?

A.—It is very difficult to judge. Of course it is less than the licit smuggling, by which I mean smuggling within the province.

Q.—You mean to say that smuggling from outside the province of foreign opium is less than the distribution of illicit savings saved by shortweight?

A.—Yes. The mahaldar sells to the registered men who find their rations short.

Q.—Don't you think that the people would get used to this cut and finally after the next five years are over the opium habit will die out?

A.—So long as illiteracy continues there seems no hope. When people are more educated the habit will be eradicated of itself. You must have public propaganda as was done in the non-co-operation time. I do not know if people that have given it up on account of the social pressure may have taken to it again.

Q.—In previous days people took opium because they thought it was good for their health and a source of enjoyment and a luxury. But now there is a change of mentality and many people are now thinking that it is a bad habit and it should be given up?

A.—It is never a luxury or a necessity. Somehow they first acquire the habit and keep it up. Just like a medicine is given for curing a disease and then stopped so also people should have left opium as soon as there was no need for it. But that has not been done. True there is a change of mentality. But still it requires a strong determination and the question is how

many people have that strong desire. This habit is a second nature and very few addicts will give it up on account of a mere change of mentality. And the probability is that many will not give it up as they do not have that strong determination.

Q.—If more strict measures are pursued, don't you think that some people at least will be able to give it up?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Yesterday some opium-eaters appeared before us and I asked them if they would take it again if opium is given to them free. They said, No. They said also they realised that it was a bad habit.

A.—I doubt if they made correct statements.

Q.—You believe that there are some people who have given it up?

A.—May have given it up; but the percentage is very small.

Q.—If it is your view to call a halt now, with regard to those who are on the register, what is your opinion regarding those who are supposed to be not registered?

A.—I should like their names to be registered. I understand when the registers were first opened people did not understand it clearly. Some of them who got themselves registered underestimated their requirements.

Q.—For how long would you keep it open?

A.—The fact should be widely published that this is the last chance and no one would be registered if they come afterwards. But then there may be some foreigners coming in now and then and if they have the opium habit they should not be refused registration. Of course you will satisfy yourselves after enquiry that they are really opium-eaters and then register them.

Q.—Such a chance was given them in 1929 and then it was clearly mentioned that that would be the last time and there would be no more chances. Do you now advise that another [illegible] chance should be given them?

A.—I would; because, on many occasions [illegible] go[illegible] ven overlooked.

Q.—It would be overlooked again? [illegible] mes

A.—I am in favour of another [illegible]

Q.—Don't you think that there is a risk of new addicts coming in?

A.—Those who were not taking opium for five years should not be given passes as a rule. Also those below 30 should not be given passes. I put it at 30 for this reason. People ordinarily enter service at the age of 25. Allow them 5 years more when they are earning. If they are not taking opium at that age then they have been convinced that it is bad. Some standard has to be fixed when you open the registers. I say that people who have been taking it for five years may be given.

Q.—Is it your desire that the habit should be stopped?

A.—Every sensible man will say that it should be stopped. I do say it should be stopped if possible.

Examined by MR. J. A. DAWSON:—Did you start as a Sub-Deputy Collector?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When did you enter Government service?

A.—1901.

Q.—When did you become an Extra Assistant Commissioner?

A.—1917.

Q.—How long were you in the Excise Department?

A.—15 years.

Q.—As Sub-Deputy Collector you toured a good deal in the mufassil?

A.—Yes. I was in the hill districts, in the Naga hills.

Q.—And not in the plains?

A.—No.

Q.—Anyhow you have had a good deal of experience with the people themselves?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Was there any smuggling at the time when you were Sub-Deputy Collector or Excise Superintendent?

A.—Now it is more. The supply depends on the demand.

Q.—Do you not ascribe this fact of more detections to the creation of a preventive staff?

A.—To the preventive staff as well to the cut.

Q.—Do you know that due to the economic condition of the people at present even the registered consumers are not able to purchase their full rationed quantity?

A.—I know some of the consumers, some of them who are over 50 cannot take their whole quantity.

Q.—For want of money and purchasing power many of them are not taking the entire rationed quantity?

A.—I won't say many. Some are not taking.

Q.—Even in Nowgong district?

A.—I know Jaluguti. That is the largest shop.

Q.—Do you know the present ration of that shop?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—Will you be surprised to know that it has come down to three seers?

A.—In many shops it has come down.

Q.—Is it not due to the want of purchasing capacity of the people?

A.—Not only that. There is a combination of circumstances. Supply from outside sources and the present economic condition have all combined.

Q.—Don't you think that the price of smuggled opium is higher than the price of treasury opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Will any consumer go to purchase smuggled opium when its price is high?

A.—I cannot give any accurate idea of smuggled opium. Its price may be double or treble.

Q.—I am asking whether any registered consumer will go and purchase smuggled opium at that price when he cannot even purchase his ration from the shops?

A.—Those who can afford take it. Your question assumes that they are not all taking even the rationed quantity.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—That is not assumption: it is a fact?

A.—Those who cannot afford to purchase the rationed quantity will not purchase it from the smugglers.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—So automatically they have been forced to give up opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—On account of the economic depression?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You already stated that this habit should be stamped out?

A.—I desire it should be confined to medical requirements. But I do not think it can be so confined.

Q.—You desire that smuggling and short-weight sales should be stopped?

A.—Yes. What I want is that instead of increasing chances of crime and then trying to stop it by strict measures, it is better to go gradually.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Are you in favour of gradual prohibition?

A.—Yes, if effective check is made to stop shortweight. I am in favour of introducing the pill form system.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—Don't you think that people resort to these two evils, I mean smuggling and short-weight sales?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Now if we stop the licit supply the short-weight sale would go automatically?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And the whole department will be able to concentrate their attention on contraband opium?

A.—Yes. Then you should strengthen the staff.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—If opium is altogether stopped from the treasury then the short-weight evil is gone?

A.—Yes. Only smuggling will increase.

Q.—Then you concentrate the whole attention on smuggling?

A.—Yes you can do that.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA:—

Q.—You are not in favour of continuing the present cut?

A.—Certainly not and I have given my reasons.

Q.—You are also in favour of bringing the large number of unregistered consumers on the book?

A.—Yes.

Q.—On account of the various reasons you have stated?

A.—Yes.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Your idea is if you want to stop opium you stop it altogether at once?

A.—Not at once.

Q.—You stop at once and get rid of the short-weight sale?

A.—You cannot stop short-weight sale. It requires new methods. First experiment on that.

Q.—Do you wish that this evil should be stamped out?

A.—Yes I desire that.

Q.—How many years do you want?

A.—That depends on circumstances.

Q.—You are in favour of gradual reduction?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know the Government has already started this policy of gradual prohibition?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You do not agree with this policy of Government?

A.—It is not a full success as desired.

Q.—Do you agree with the policy?

A.—I agree subject to the views expressed.

Q.—You know that the present policy aims at stamping out the opium habit in ten years by a ten per cent. reduction of ration?

A.—Yes. I agree with that. But now I want a halt made. I do not mean that the policy should be stopped.

Q.—If you cry halt now when do you want to resume it again?

A.—I want the halt till you devise a better system for stopping shortweight.

Q.—Is it till the pill system is introduced ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is your idea ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Am I correct there ?

A.—Yes. If that move is successful then with a strong staff you can deal with outside smuggling.

Q.—If the pill system is not practicable then you will cry a halt for the present policy ?

A.—Then it should be seen what other methods could be taken up. If there is no alternative then I would wait till the older generation passes away.

Q.—Do I understand you to mean that till this older generation who are not yet 50 die out you will stop the present policy ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And those under 50 should not be given passes ?

A.—My idea is 30.

Q.—So you will wait so long ?

A.—I want the people to start propaganda. Then the mass will be better educated.

Q.—You want the present generation of opium-eaters to die out before you would revive the policy ?

A.—Yes, if a better system could not be found. In the meantime have propaganda.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—If you can check shortweight will you go on with the present policy ?

A.—That is my idea.

Q.—What is your idea. Tell us what is your opinion supposing that shortweight could be checked ?

A.—The present system should be followed. The cut system should be continued for another five years.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—What about smuggling ?

A.—Smuggling will have to be stopped. One kind of smuggling will be stopped if shortweight is stopped. Then only outside smuggling remains and the staff can concentrate on it if necessary with extra staff.

Q.—If shortweight cannot be stopped then you will wait till the present generation pass away ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—You probably know that in 1920 we were given to understand that no more passes should be issued ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If persons who were not opium consumers in 1920 apply for passes now ?

A.—I won't give them now if they are not addicts for five years before. When the names are brought into the list they should be put under the same conditions as those whose rations are cut.

Q.—You want these new entries to be subjected to the same cut as those who are now in the registers ?

A.—Yes. Then all together would gradually give up the habit in five years more

Q.—Do you think that the smuggling has increased or detection has increased ?

A.—Both. There can be no detection unless there is smuggling.

Q.—Do you know what amount of opium was smuggled into the district in 1925-26 ?

A.—I have no figures about that I think contraband opium smuggling in 1926 was less.

Q.—In 1923-24 ?

A.—I cannot give the figures But I think it is less

Q.—Have you heard recently of any case where as much as 38 seers were smuggled ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Where ?

A.—Near the Shillong road or somewhere.

Q.—Have you heard of 38 seers ?

A.—I do not recollect the quantity.

Q.—Do you know that in 1923-24 in Dibrugarh there was in one haul 38 seers ?

A.—I think they said it was China opium

Q.—That was before the present policy was introduced ?

A.—Yes, but by that time shop rationing was introduced and the shops could not supply more than that ration.

Q.—Do you object to the rationing of the shops ?

A.—We have now advanced a further stage. And now you are rationing individual consumption.

No. 33.

After Lunch.

The Committee then examined MR. FURZE, Special Superintendent of Police.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You have been in the Sadiya Frontier Tract ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How long were you there as an officer ?

A.—I commenced in the Sadiya Frontier Tract during the Abor expedition. It was there that I first started the registration system in Assam.

Q.—What year was that ?

A.—1912-13 I think. That was the first experiment in registration in Assam.

Q.—Were you there in 1927 ?

A.—I was also there in 1927.

Q.—There was big smuggling at that time ?

A.—Yes. There the Mishmis bring in chiefly Chinese opium.

Q.—What year were you last there ?

A.—Up till March last year, 1932.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—From ?

A.—December 1927, I think.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Last year did you have some smuggling there ?

A.—I had a large number of opium growing cases there. caught not less than ten villages growing opium.

Q.—You mean poppy ?

A.—Yes, poppy.

Q.—Why did they cultivate poppy if they get opium easil from China ?

A.—There is a tremendous demand and the women folk d he cultivation. They say it is much easier to get money fo their poppy cultivation than for any other cultivation.

Q.—We understand it is a difficult affair to extract opiu from poppy ?

A.—They get together all their old cloths and rags and the slice the poppy when ripe and soak these rags and dry them. Sometimes they make nice long stripes.

Q.—You have seen that yourself?

A.—Yes, they have shown me the process. It is a pleasure to them to cultivate the poppy. They all [illegible] tered area. I was actually in the hills [illegible] information reached me In the villag[illegible] difficulty in finding out this cultivation. You would never believe that there was any poppy growing. All the places looked like virgin jungle.

Q.—What year was that?

A.—Early in 1932, I think.

Q.—Would not the very existence of this poppy plantation indicate that the people are not getting opium from China or the Hukong Valley?

A.—It is very difficult to say. All these people are confirmed opium addicts. I doubt if you can ever stop them until they die out. One of the reasons why they want to grow opium is that it is very difficult in the rains to get to the opium shop; communications are so bad. The other reason is that in the Sadiya Frontier Tract we have cut down the opium passes to a very great extent. The pass system in the Sadiya Frontier has been in force much longer than in any other districts in Assam. The system of cutting down rations was prevailing long before the ten per cent. cut was introduced. The Political Officer goes round on his tour. One of the methods adopted for punishing a man if he has done anything wrong is to cut down his ration. For a long time we have been trying to restrict the rations because it is far and away the worst place for opium and the population is very small. In the matter of opium evil next to Sadiya is Lakhimpur and then comes Sibsagar.

Q.—What is the number there?

A.—I could not tell you. I have not come prepared to give evidence.

Q.—We just want to know whether you think that smuggled opium is coming in larger quantities than it used to come about 4, 5 or 6 years ago?

A.—That is a question which is difficult to answer. But the probabilities are that in the year 1930 there was more smuggling than usual.

Q.—Did you catch several cases?

A.—We got a great deal of information.

Q.—Were they punished severely?

A.—You cannot punish until you can prove.

Q.—What did you do ?

A.—The Opium Act is not in force there and you only keep to the spirit of the rules. You can ordinarily give him six months under section 188.

Q.—These smugglers knowing they are caught and punished were they afraid of coming in large numbers ?

A.—They are all Mishmis and a very difficult people to deal with. They have got a very good organisation.

Q.—Are the smugglers Mishmis ?

A.—Yes. The opium has a ready sale. If you go to the Mishmi hills you can get opium in any quantity. When you have addicts whose rations are cut it is very difficult to stop these people from smuggling. I had one Excise Inspector and two excise peons in my time. I satisfied the Government as to the necessity for a little extra staff and after great difficulty I could get only a small increase in the staff.

Q.—Cases of detection have been fewer in recent years ?

A.—Of smuggling, yes. But then you have not got th staff to do both jobs. Last time they were busy on keeping dow poppy cultivation.

Q.—It is not very difficult to keep down poppy ?

A.—Had you been with me on the trip, I doubt if yo would have said so.

Q.—We heard the other day that in the Assam Valley popp was grown in the compounds of houses on the banks of the river

A.—I had to deal with cultivation at the foot of the hill where there are no roads of any kind. They have their spies al round. The cultivation is right in the thick of the jungle. Un less you have got a man who knows the way thoroughly it i absolutely difficult to get along. It is very difficult to find you way. It is only by chance that we can get and punish th growers.

Examined by MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—In the administered area they are mostly all opiun addicts ?

A.—The Mishmis are.

Q.—Do you think there is any hope of their giving up the habit ?

A.—Not unless we take them over and train them to give up. It must be done gradually.

Q.—They do not realise I suppose that it is an evil habit ?

A.—They look upon it as a kind of medicine.

Q.—About these Chinese opium which comes from Yunnan and other places, do you think it is sent into Lakhimpur or does it not go beyond the Sadiya Frontier ?

A.—I think a certain amount goes into Lakhimpur and Sibsagar also takes something. I have never been able to catch them there but my belief is so.

Q.—Is it very cheap ?

A.—Compared with excise opium it is very cheap but I can not say at what rate it is sold. Certain people told me it depends much on the need of the consumer.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—Is there any prospect of seizing it ?

A.—We seized small amounts. You have to take men of proved ability into the jungle on the hill side. These Mishmis come down regularly every year. There are certain men who work cutting cane. They won't come into the administered area until they hear definitely that the Excise Inspector has gone away and then they come down. That is their *modus operandi*.

Q.—You said with reference to poppy cultivation that you had found it growing in ten villages. What was the total area ?

A.—I do not remember.

Q.—Was that during the years you were there ?

A.—In 1932.

Q.—You were there when this cut originated in 1928 ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you find after some time that there was more smuggling go on ?

A.—It is very difficult to say because no attention was drawn to it. I personally think so. But it is very difficult to prove.

Q.—Do you know what prices it was sold for ?

A.—No, I have got no figures.

Q.—I think you said that they will not cease taking opium until they die out ? What do you mean ?

A.—They are all very badly addicted. It is not fair for me to speak about them because they are all outside the Assam Valley and it is bad for me to give evidence against them.

What I mean is that it is very difficult to get them to stop taking opium. Seeing that these Abors were very keen on opium—and they were our late enemies—I wanted to try and see if they can be persuaded to give up the habit. The young among them were taking to opium badly. At one time, the ordinary form of ceremonial present to any of these hill men was to offer opium. You could not go out anywhere without opium being given them. I wanted to stop that. Then we started the registration system. It met with success to a great extent and it was then adopted for the whole of the Frontier Tract. It did not prove a success with the Singpohs because they consume so largely.

Q.—What is the consumption?

A.—A Chief takes probably 7 or 8 tolas; probably more.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—Can you say whether the quality of China opium or of Malwa opium is inferior to treasury opium?

A.—I do not know about Malwa opium; it never penetrated to Sadiya. But the China opium I think is of similar quality to treasury opium. However, I cannot be sure; I am not an expert. It looks very similar in every way and people think it is the same and they say also that it tastes the same also. When they come down to Sadiya during the cold weather the Mishmis get temporary passes.

Q.—What is the price of China opium?

A.—The difficulty is this. I could not tell you what the price is in the Mishmi hills. The chinese come down through the Mishmi hills and take away goods in exchange. Therefore, it is almost impossible to say the price. We have no information. But there is no doubt that a great deal come through the Mishmi hills.

Q.—You say the registration has been successful in Sadiya?

A.—I think on the whole it is a success.

MR. DAWSON:—

Q.—In Burma there is a district called Bhamo which adjoins Yunnan where the Chinese opium comes from. While the usual price of the Burma treasury opium is Rs. 2 or more, it is sold in Bhamo at 8 as. so as to counteract the cheap price of Chinese opium. Suppose you make the price of excise opium 8 as. in Sadiya Frontier, what would be the effect?

A.—I think it is very difficult to speculate on that assumption.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA —

Q —There is no pass system in Sadiya ?

A —Yes, it was introduced first in Sadiya

Q.—But you have not got the 10 per cent cut system ?

A.—Yes, we made it for two years. The trouble is that the Political Officer had already been cutting down and reducing excessive rations before the system came in When he took up a pass for renewal he tried to effect a big cut, saying that in each case the ration was much too much and that he will cut it further.

Q.—In the same way new passes also were dealt with ?

A —He did that before the Government orders regarding the renewal of passes came in : it was in his power to give passes but he did not do so except in very extraordinary and exceptional cases of a previous addict

Q.—May I know if there is an Assamese village near Dhala river in the Sadiya jurisdiction ?

A.—Yes

Q.—Where do they get their ration from ?

A —From the Saikhoaghat opium shop.

Q.—The rations are not supposed to be reduced annually ?

A.—They have not been reduced during the last two years' They were reduced for two years before and on my recommendation it stopped at that.

Q.—Had you any complaints from the villagers ?

A —It was in my power to give new passes and whenever I was in Sadiya I had about 50 or 60 people asking for new passes. How many wanted to trade in opium I do not know. But the number of applicants and their pleadings show the intensity of demand is very great.

Q.—In your time there were unregistered opium-eaters in the villages ?

A.—Yes, a large number.

Q.—Did they take opium from the mahaldars ?

A.—A certain number of them probably took from the mahaldar. Mostly they resorted to illicit opium from the Mishmis and that is very easy to get.

Q —Is it so even at Saikhoaghat ?

A.—Yes, a lot of opium traffic was going on there.

Q.—Suppose you grant passes to all needy persons, will the people buy illicit opium ?

A.—They will because the price is cheap.

Q.—You think the price of treasury opium is high ?

A.—It is difficult to say, it depends which way you look at it. It is a deterrent to those who want to start the habit. But it is difficult to stop it in the case of men who are addicts. You cannot stop it; I have tried hard to persuade consumers to give up the habit. In some cases I kept them in the hospital but I could not succeed.

Q.—You came in contact with the village people ?

A.—Oh, yes.

Q.—Your staff prosecuted men for illegal possession of opium ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You know the Government policy of ten per cent. cut ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you in favour of continuing the policy in the interests of the addicts as well as the interests of the Government as well as the welfare of the public ?

A.—It is rather a general question. I think the ten per cent. cut is too quick. I realise that a great deal of good had been done but the trouble is that all these people up there always complain that they want more. Whatever the age of the consumers that is the complaint. The older man says he wants more. And if you are going to cut it too quickly he will be wanting more and he will actual get less. I was told they pay up to Rs. 10 for the smallest quantity of opium but whether it is true or not I cannot say. It shows their need.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Do you think that an increase in the preventive staff will result in more detections ?

A.—I really could not say. But I presume, if they have a better staff, they would be able to detect more cases, but I have not got sufficient knowledge of the working of the excise staff.

Q.—Do you think that any propaganda work against the opium habit will have any effect on the people taking opium ?

A.—I think it may in the long run. Unless you can stop youngsters from contracting the habit in the village, it is no use. It is the village youngster you should get at.

Q.—How to stop the evil?

A.—You can improve their outlook by means of proper [e]ducation and increase their stamina sufficiently to stand against [t]he opium habit.

Q.—Some people recommend legislation to prevent it?

A.—I do not agree. Besides is seems hard on the people.

[E]xamined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You are speaking about Sadiya?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How long have you been there?

A.—A good many years, off and on. Originally I was there [f]rom 1911 to the middle of 1915. Again in 1924 I was there [f]or ten months. And then when I came from Sylhet, I was [t]here up to last year when I came to Shillong.

Q.—You know Srijut Janakinath Sarma?

A.—Yes; he was originally a clerk. He is an officer who [c]an speak with some authority on excise matters in Sadiya. He [i]s the only excise officer we had for some years.

Q.—He said in his evidence: "If you do away with the [p]olicy of restriction and reduction the consumption will increase. [E]ven at present people are actually consuming about 37 maunds [illegible] is continuing and smuggling will continue [illegible] policy is continued or given up because [illegible] o cheap and is sold from door to door and is [illegible]". Do you agree with that?

A.—I agree as regards the Sadiya Frontier Tract. I under[s]tand you were wanting to find out whether the opium comes to [A]ssam proper.

Q.—I want to know whether it is true that so far as con[s]umption is concerned, in the Sadiya Frontier, it does not [m]atter whether you have the ten per cent cut or not?

A.—As regards that I think he is right.

Q.—It is comparatively a small place and I suppose you [k]now the people who carry on the trade?

A.—Most of the people are in the unadministered area, the Mishmis. They bring it down with them.

Q.—Do they supply direct to Sadiya?

A.—Generally they themselves do it. But there are one or two local Assamese who are believed to be their alies, we have not been able to catch them. The only big catch we made was that of Tibetan opium and the men were Mishmis and I believe they carry on the trade themselves mostly.

Q.—Are there not middle-men who take charge of the smuggled opium ?

A.—I have not been able to find out if this is so. But Janakiram had his own theory and suspected there were middle-men. They have never been detected.

Q.—So these Mishmis distribute themselves in Sadiya ?

A.—Yes. I am unable to tell you what quantity they bring I presume they get in touch with known opium addicts and those men in turn spread the happy news that opium has arrived.

Q.—In this matter you are in the same position as ourselves, namely, everything is a surmise ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Since what year was this reduction stopped ; you said it was stopped on your recommendation ?

A.—I think in the middle of 1930.

Q.—The registers have been kept open in Sadiya for the issue of opium passes ?

A.—I do not know what the existing orders are. For a long time we wanted to bring in no more opium-eaters. We had to take Government permission when we kept open in 1929. You have a shifting population, for example, a large number of the Singpos, and if you do not give them some sort of relief they are bound to go in for illicit opium.

Q.—You say that for such the register should be opened ?

A.—I do not know what is meant by keeping it open.

MR. DAWSON:—

Q.—Supposing an unregistered consumer comes and says he wants opium and cannot do without opium ?

A.—We only issue passes to Mishmis who are proved to be addicts. That was the policy when I was there.

Q.—Do you approve of the issue of fresh passes to persons who did not take passes before but who are confirmed addicts for a long time ?

A.—I think I gave such a pass only in one case of a local inhabitant, a Nadiyal. That is the only case I remember.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—This policy was introduced in 1928 and later the registers were re-opened and Government said that that would be the last time and no more passes would be issued after September 1929. Supposing a man comes now and says that he did not take a pass then, and that he is an addict and wants a pass now. Leaving aside the question of Sadiya or any other particular place, would you advise Government in such a case to issue passes?

A.—Yes if he was an addict I would advise.

Q.—He had a chance of taking pass last time when it was definitely notified that that would be the last time that he is an addict and asks for a pass?

A.—I would advise that careful enquiries be made in every case before issuing passes. There are cases where people set up false pleas and there would be people ready to do that again

Q.—There is also the danger of new addicts coming in if you keep the registers open?

A.—I am afraid I cannot give an opinion on that. I think personally that a man who is an addict should get his pass. What you want to do is to gradually do away with the addicts.

Q.—But there will be no end of it if you go on issuing passes.

A.—I have said before that I should be very chary in issuing new passes. But I do not think it is necessary to give a certain discretion to the issuing officer.

No 31.

Next the committee examined—

1. JAYARAM DOLOI.
2. GIRISH CHANDRA CHAUDHURY, Barpeta.
3 PRATAP NARAYAN CHAUDHURY, Nalbari.
4. NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR, Rampur.

All the witnesses are mauzadars.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR:—The reduction policy has been a partial success. The policy has succeeded in effecting reduction in the consumption of treasury opium and the reduction has been more than the smuggled opium got from outside

Srijut PRATAP NARAYAN CHAUDHURY:—Short weight sale has affected this policy.

Srijut GIRISH CHANDRA CHAUDHURY:—The practice of giving short-weight sales has also affected this policy because the surplus goes to unregistered consumers.

Srijut NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR:—On account of the rise in the price of treasury opium many consumers have been compelled to give up the opium habit as they have no money to purchase.

The policy has succeeded in bringing down the formation of new addicts.

Srijut JAYARAM DOLOI:—But at the same time this surplus opium has gone to supply new addicts and new addicts have come into being.

All the witnesses except Srijut Nabin Chandra Taluqdar approved of the ten per cent. policy.

All the four witnesses were in favour of continuing the policy. They believed that smuggling existed in Assam. But whether it was to a large or small extent, they were unable to say. In their opinion the policy should continue and all efforts should be made to check smuggling of opium from outside. One of the means to do it was that the price of treasury opium should be the same as in Bengal and Bihar and Orissa. If that cannot be done the prices should be at least the same as the lowest prices in these three provinces.

Srijut NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR considered that the mahaldars were cheating the consumers to the extent of about four annas on the average. On that basis he reckoned that there would be 25 per cent. unregistered consumers.

The remaining three witnesses considered that the percentage of unregistered consumers would not be so high as that. But they could not say how many they would be.

Srijut NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR thought that no unregistered consumer should get a pass unless he was 50 years of age or over. The rest thought that in cases where the unregistered consumer was below that age he should be compelled to give up the habit. Not only no passes should be issued but they should be punished for taking opium.

Srijut PRATAP NARAYAN CHAUDHURY added that age should not be a criterion in granting new passes. But those who required opium on medical grounds and those whose health may be affected without opium, should be given passes. The old registered consumers should also be examined and if they did not require opium for medical reasons their passes should be stopped.

All the witnesses were of opinion that opium should be supplied in pills and that the pills should be distributed by Government servants.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

SRIJUT NABIN CHANDRA TALUQDAR :—There is an opium shop in my mouza. The mahaldar sells the surplus at a rate varying from Rs. 6 to Rs. 8. I know the treasury rate is Rs. 2 only. If the unregistered opium-eaters be brought into the book they would be entitled to get opium at Rs. 2. At the same time attempt should be made to compel them to give up the habit. If they are registered surely they will be monetarily benefitted. I think there are about 25 per cent. unregistered opium-eaters. If Government could stop shortweight and smuggling then the unregistered opium-eaters could be given passes only after 50 years of age. Below that age if they are found to be eating opium they need not be given passes and they should be punished.

SRIJUT PRATAP NARAYAN CHAUDHURY :—I would [illegible] statement that only people who would die if they did [illegible] should get passes.

[illegible] by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOS-[illegible]

[illegible] GIRISH CHANDRA CHAUDHURY :—I have heard from outsiders that opium comes from Bhutan and from there it comes to the Darrang district. I have not heard of opium coming into the Kamrup district.

All the witnesses agreed that opium habit should be stamped out. The treasury opium should be sold in pill form and by Government servants. They all liked that the Government policy should continue. But the defects should be remedied.

SRIJUT GIRISH CHANDRA CHAUDHURY :—I met a few unregistered consumers in my mauza whom I could name. They admitted they got their supply from the registered consumers who had their rations a litle in excess. I got the names of these registered consumers who were selling their opium. I did not report to the authorities as I did not consider it to be my duty. I have said that the opium habit is very bad.

No. 35.

The committee next examined some *Kaniyas*, led by Rup Dhar Chaudhury. His age was over 60 and he had a pass for 4 tolas. He deposed :—

I have no objection if Government reduce the rations. Formerly Government gave me 4½ tolas but now it has been reduced to 4 tolas only.

Opium is a bad habit. I have landed property and I have no need to remain in other men's houses. My son is an opium-eater and he was convicted of theft sometime ago. My idea is

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either make opium cheap or totally prohibit it. As long as ther is opium to be had, we cannot avoid the habit. If you sto opium a great number will die and some may survive. Thes people gave up the habit of smoking opium and they have not taken to the habit of opium-eating. We do not know anythin of the Opium Smoking Act. We know only that Governmen have given us passes for either eating or smoking opium. Due t the economic depression the consumers have not been able t purchase their rationed quantity. If the reduction policy conti nues we shall also go on reducing. If this reduction goes on gradually opium-eaters will live. But if you stop it suddenl many will die at once.

Another opium-eater, SAMIRAN, deposed as follows:—

My age is 45. I have been taking opium for the last years. The elder brother of the lessee is also here to-day and I take opium which has been saved by the mahaldar.

My original ration was one tola and I now get only half a tola which is absolutely insufficient. I cannot get along with this small quantity and I pray that I may be given more Otherwise I shall not be able to live. I was happy to hear the Excise Commissioner has come and I pray I should be given more opium.

RUP DHAR CHAUDHURY:—I also pray that I should get an opium shop at Kukurmara. I asked the Superintendent for a shop and he asked me to go to the Commissioner who is here to-day. If I am given the shop I shall run it well and there will be no question of shortweight.

No. 36.

Next the Committee examined—

1. GHANASYAM DAS, *ex*-lessee and retired Sub-Inspector of Police.
2. NANDAMAI MAHAJAN, *ex*-lessee.
3. SABAK CHANDRA DOLOI (who submitted a statement which was read to the Committee by the Chairman).

SRIJUT SABAK CHANDRA DOLOI considered the policy was a success and he knew of persons who had given up the habit. It is an evil habit and we want that it should be stamped out of the province. The unregistered consumers in Gauhati are very few,

SRIJUT GHANASYAM DAS said that in all the five mauzas near Sorbhog there were 50 unregistered consumers. He further said:

I know this because I was a lessee myself and I have enquired from other opium-eaters. I was a lessee from 1932-33 in the Sorbhog shop. Consumers get opium from the Cooch Behar side. They themselves bring opium and they are supplied by others also. One or two opium-eaters go personally to Cooch Behar and I know the name of one. I do not know exactly what quantity he brings; he is an Assamese. Some opium-eaters protested to me for giving shortweight in the shops. I gave up the shop myself.

NANDARAM MAI :—I had also an excise shop for 14 or 15 years and I never gave shortweight. I had a town shop and I voluntarily gave it up on account of the stringency of the new rules and I did not want to get into trouble in my old age. I got Rs. 19 a seer profit out of the shop in which I sold two seers, that is I got Rs. 38 in all. There was a salesman whom I paid Rs. 25.

I do not think that people die for not taking opium. They will be cured, some in a week and others take a little longer. There are cases where they were cured in six or seven months also.

SRIJUT SABAK CHANDRA DOLOI said that he gave up the shop because he was required to remain in the shop and did not like it.

SRIJUT GHANASYAM DAS :—I have no shop.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA —

SRIJUT NANDAMAI MAHAJAN :—Opium should be gradually reduced and not at once because some people would die. The reduction policy should now be stopped, as the opium-eaters get into trouble.

SRIJUT GHANASYAM DAS :—I say that, after examination, whoever wants more opium should be given more. Everyone should have his required quantity. The unregistered opium-eaters pay double to the mahaldar. They should be given passes after examination by a local Committee and a Medical Officer.

NANDAMAI MAHAJAN :—I am also generally of the same opinion. If Government do not give them *patta* then will resort to malpractices.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

SRIJUT GHANASYAM DAS and SRIJUT NANDAMAI MAHAJAN :—In our opinion those who would die for want of opium should be allowed to take opium. It is only the doctors who would be able to say which opium-eater would die and which not. If it is the medical opinion that a man will not die and that he can be cured of his disease, then it is better that he is not given opium. The sooner the habit is stamped out of our country the better. Those who are addicted to opium cannot be expected to give up the habit. But they can give up the habit if they could not get opium. I have seen some persons who have given up opium at once. They suffer for sometime.

SRIJUT SABAK CHANDRA DOLOI :—I cannot say whether my opinion will be shared by the members of the Kaibarta community.

The Committee then adjourned to the next day.

No. 37.

Wednesday the 12th July 1933.

The Committee next examined—

MAJOR J. L. DONNELLY, I.M.S., Civil Surgeon, Gauhati.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—How long have you been here, Major?

A.—One year.

Q.—You visit the jail as Civil Surgeon?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are there opium-eaters in the jail?

A.—We occasionally get a man admitted who is alleged to be an opium-eater.

Q.—You don't give opium to any of them?

A.—No.

Q.—If you do not give them any opium do they have any physical suffering?

A.—No, as a rule not; none of them have complained.

Q.—You don't think that a man will die if he does not take opium?

A.—I do not think so.

Examined by Mr. DAWSON :—

Q.—Sometimes do you get applicants for opium passes coming to you for a certificate ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you find it easy or difficult to certify whether he needs opium or he is an addict ?

A.—I find it is impossible.

Q.—You have not got much experience in Assam ?

A.—No.

Examined by Srijut MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—How many opium-eaters did you find in the prison ?

A.—Very few. I should say that during the year not more than six.

Q.—Did you ascertain what quantity they used to consume ?

A.—No.

Q.—You think that people can do without opium ?

A.—It is very much easier for a man in jail who knows undoubtedly that he cannot get any opium, no matter what quantity he wants. But a man who is free he has to exercise his will in order to abstain from it.

Q.—But what will be the suffering in the case of a man who has been an addict when he comes in the jail and gets no opium ?

A.—Probably his suffering is more mental than physical.

Examined by Srijut BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Can you fix the ration of an opium-eater by seeing him.

A.—No.

Q.—Is it not possible ?

A.—Not for me. If a man simply comes to me and says he wants a certificate that he is an opium eater I am sorry I cannot help him. If he comes to me with some relative who is known to me and if the relative assures me that he is taking so much opium. I have in some cases, given certificates on the strength of the statement but not on physical fitness.

SRIJUT GHANASYAM DAS and SRIJUT NANDAMAI MAHAJAN :—In our opinion those who would die for want of opium should be allowed to take opium. It is only the doctors who would be able to say which opium-eater would die and which not. If it is the medical opinion that a man will not die and that he can be cured of his disease, then it is better that he is not given opium. The sooner the habit is stamped out of our country the better. Those who are addicted to opium cannot be expected to give up the habit. But they can give up the habit if they could not get opium. I have seen some persons who have given up opium at once. They suffer for sometime.

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A.—No, as a rule not; none of them have complained.

Q.—You don't think that a man will die if he does not take opium?

A.—I do not think so.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Do you think that there will be any increase in the mortality of this district if opium was stopped?

A.—No.

Q.—I think the same remarks would hold good to the rest of the province as well?

A.—Do you mean mortality due directly to the withdrawal of opium?

Q.—Yes.

A.—In some cases opium is the means of saving life.

Q.—I do not mean opium as a medicine?

A.—I do not think that withdrawal of opium is going to increase mortality.

Q.—Do you think considering the climate of the province opium is necessary for the preservation of health? I mean to say is there anyting particular in the climate which necessitates consumption of opium?

A.—No, not the climate itself. My own opinion is from what I have been able to find out, that a man starts it when he get such illness as dysentery. I think there is a lot of dysentery in the district and some people, I have questioned, tell me that they took opium when they had an acute attack of dysentery. Opium certainly would stop symptoms of dysentery.

Q.—Will you prescribe opium for dysentery?

A.—No.

Q.—I think the use of Dover's powder is good for dysentery?

A.—I do not use it for dysentery.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY:—

Q.—Is that powder not given to children?

A.—I think it is children's medicine and it is usually given to them.

Q.—Is not opium curative?

A.—Opium is not curative. You only give it to bind up the bowels when you find there is excessive loss of fluid and you simply want to stop it. One of the dangerous effects of dysentery

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You discourage the use of Dover's powder?

A.—It is purely treating the symptom and it is not treating the disease.

Q.—In case of dysentery do you not think that it is very much more better if the people do not use opium?

A.—Yes. But in outlying places where there is no medical help, it is difficult to imagine that anybody not educated in medical matters is going to use the rational form of treatment. It seems to me that it is the obvious sort of drug to use for.

Q.—That is due to ignorance and for want of better treatment?

A.—I do not think that people would use the proper treatment even if it were there unless they were properly instructed about it. It is a big question.

Q.—You mean to say that people would prefer to take opium instead of taking any other proper medicine?

A.—Yes. Opium stops the symptoms quickly and it eases the pain almost at once. The other treatment, which is a more rational treatment such as saline at first apparently increases the symptoms because it first clears out the bowels and cleanses them.

Q.—Do you think it is a good idea after all to take opium for the disease?

A.—It is rather a big question. But I think rather than taking nothing to ease the symptoms it is better and opium is a good thing.

Q.—Does it not bring in a more serious disease than the disease itself?

A.—Opium habit itself is a disease. The addicts, if they continue taking opium, can do a very good day's work.

Q.—Do you think it is a very good thing taking opium instead of other medicines?

A.—If they can be persuaded to take the other forms of treatment, there is no doubt it be better; there is no comparison. But there is also no doubt that opium removes the first symptoms.

Q.—In places like Goalpara where opium is not available?

A.—They probably suffer more.

Q.—Do you think the result is better than when they took to opium first ?

A.—The result is that in the districts where opium is available you naturally have more opium addicts.

Q.—Your idea is that the more difficult you make it to get opium the easier for the addicts to give up the habit ?

A.—Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—How long have you been in Government service ?

A.—In India six years.

Q.—Where were you before you came to Assam ?

A.—For a few months I was in Wazaristan and before that n Madras.

Q.—In England or anywhere else were you also practising ?

A.—I was in hospital practice at Home in England.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You said that the mortality would not increase if you tpp opium. On what basis did you say that ?

A.—I have never yet heard or read of a death due to withdrawal of opium. And I have not seen any case in the jail.

Q.—During the last 12 months of your incumbency in Gauhati you mean ?

A.—That reply is not based on merely the experience of the last 12 months.

Q.—I think you said that before that you did not come in contact with opium-eaters ?

A.—That does not mean that as a medical man I have never read about it.

Q.—Is that the knowledge that you got from the books ?

A.—It is a combination of what I learnt and read and heard in Kamrup and what I have read previously.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—I presume that what you read in books is based on somebody's experience ?

A.—Presumably.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

In hospitals have you any experience of the use of

A.—Only in the form of morphia.

Q.—Opium is classed as poison in England?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If it is a good stuff in helping people to get some relief why should they in England bring it under poison?

A.—Presumably it does produce addicts.

Q.—It is a habit forming drug?

A.—Yes.

No. 38.

The Committee next examined MR. C. S. MULLAN, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Gauhati.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—In your reply to the first question you say "On the other hand it has proved unsuccessful inasmuch as a large amount of the opium now consumed comes from illicit sources". What is the basis of your statement?

A.—My basis is my own experience since the policy was instituted. My experience is based on reports which are continually being submitted to me and my own inspections of opium shops.

Q.—What do you mean by illicit sources, you mean short-weight savings by the mahaldar or foreign smuggled opium?

A.—I mean both.

Q.—What do you think is the proportion of the consumption of foreign opium and savings from shortweight?

A.—It is impossible to give a reply to that question; I do not know.

Q.—Supposing we would say that the consumption is all supplied by the mahaldars?

A.—I should not believe you.

Q.—Supposing you say it is three-fourths of the savings of the mahaldar?

A.—I should accept it with very geat doubt.

Q.—You will accept it?

A.—I do not.

Q.—Is it because you do not know?

A.—I do not know; but neither do you.

Q.—We are guessing and you are also guessing?

A.—That is correct; we are both in the dark.

Q.—Now do you suppose that the policy can be called unsuccessful if the larger amount of opium which is consumed by people who have not got passes be from the savings of the mahaldars?

A.—Yes, I would consider it to be unsuccessful.

Q.—In what way will the policy be unsuccessful?

A.—Because I presume it is not the business of the Government to enrich the mahaldar, you are making them rich.

Q.—We take it for granted for the sake of argument, that the Government does not think of revenue now. The great problem is to try and abolish the opium habit since it is bad for the people. Now the Government policy is that after five years from now no more opium will be issued from the treasury. At that time there will be no more mahaldars and no shortweight but the only problem will be smuggled opium. If that be the case, then why should we consider that the policy would be unsuccessful if there be illicit supply of opium from the shops by the mahaldars?

A.—My reply to that would be that you are cutting out all question of smuggled opium and leaving it on one side My reply is, your policy would still be unsuccessful unless the Government are willing to see that the unfortunate opium-eaters are cheated.

MR. E S ROFFEY:—

Q.—Cheated in what way?

A.—By paying more for opium than they have to.

Q.—But the mahaldar ceases to exist?

A.—During the period of five years to follow.

THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—It will be granted that there will be difficulties whatever policy you adopt and it is impossible to make everything perfect. In the long run these difficulties would disappear. Therefore you might agree with us that if this policy be carried on for five years more, these irregularities in the shops would not affect the success of the policy?

A.—I agree.

Q.—The only problem then is the smuggled foreign opium?

A.—I agree.

Q.—Now what do you suppose as regards this foreign smuggled opium, is it increasing or is it decreasing?

A.—I cannot reply to that because I have been away from the district administration now for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. In this district the opium problem is very small compared with Sibsagar or Lakhimpur. At the present moment I cannot give you a reply as to what has happened during the last few years On account of the present economic depression probably smuggling, I should think, is at the lowest ebb.

Q.—Do you know that there are some people who do not buy even their quota?

A.—Yes, there are.

Q.—Will that prove that smuggling also has decreased?

A.—In this district I have inspected several shops since I have been here. In some of the shops on the borders of the Khasi Hills, Sonapur for example, every man is taking his full ration. In certain other shops some are not taking on account of the fact that they are very poor. But I do not think if it would be wise to come to a conclusion as to the decrease of smuggling on that basis.

Q.—Do you know what the price of smuggled opium is?

A.—I cannot tell you exactly. But I think in Sibsagar, from what I can say of my experience four years ago, it is certainly more than double the price of treasury opium.

Q.—If the price of smuggled opium is higher than the price of treasury opium surely a consumer that wants opium would prefer treasury opium to smuggled opium?

A.—Of course he does.

Q.—Then if the consumer does not take his full ration it shows that he does not want to because he has no money or because he has given up the habit?

A.—Exactly.

Q.—And that he does not take any opium from illicit sources?

A.—Generally that would be so.

Examined by Mr. DAWSON:—

Q.—Do you think there are many unregistered consumers at present in Kamrup district?

A.—The total number of pass-holders in this district is very small compared with other districts. We have only got about something like 500 I think here.

Q.—Supposing we assume that there are opium addicts who are not registered but who get their supply from some source, would you be in favour of opening the registers?

A.—*I have already stated that in my statement.*

Examined by SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN:—

Q.—You are in Kamrup only for the last three months? And you base your replies on your experience in the Sibsagar district?

A.—Largely, yes.

Q.—As you said the problem is not at all acute here?

A.—It is not acute as it is in Sibsagar.

Q.—If you want to open the registers how long would you keep it open?

A.—I should make it a good job of it; certainly for a year.

Q.—You think by that time all would come in?

A.—Even then possibly some people would not come in.

Q.—What to do with them?

A.—Possibly in another five years you may have to re-open the register again.

Q.—Will that not be bad?

A.—I do not think so

Q.—Don't you think that people have given up the habit on the assumption that it would not be possible to get passes?

A.—I do not think so

Q.—Don't you think that many people do not take opium for fear they will not get passes if they should wish?

A.—I certainly think that that has been the general effect of the policy.

Q.—If you open the registers periodically will it not have a bad psychological effect?

A.—A man does not get a desire for opium merely because the registers are open?

Q.—Would you not like that opium be given up?

A.—My own opinion is that opium in moderation is not bad. Unless you give full facilities for medical treatment, it is simply cruel to stop it. I find many Punjabees, Sikhs, they take opium to a month. It does not harm them and look at their build. In excess it is bad of course just like anything in excess, even a drink. I take a peg a day and it does not harm me. But if a man indulges in excess it is certainly harmful.

Q.—What do you think of the Excise staff ?

A.—I prefer not to say a word.

Q.—If that be so, then who will supervise the Excise staff.

A.—If I could get respectable mahaldars appointed (the same status as mauzadars with decent connections, I shoul be inclined to do away with the Excise officers and give the wor of supervision to the Sub-Deputy Collector. I should be incline to abolish the Excise staff entirely.

Q.—That account for your answer to question 15 ?

A.—I have not faith in the staff. I have had dealings with the Excise staff of all grades and as in every other service, there are black sheep here but in the Excise department the tempta- tion is so strong.

Q.—But in the Police Department is it not the same ?

A.—I cannot say. The Police Department is outside the pur- view of this Committee. One thing is general. The subordi- nates generally are corrupt. But in the Excise Department bribes are larger and corruption is probably more rampant.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DUTTA :—

Q.—Do you think that giving of shortweight is very com- mon among the le sees ?

A.—I should say that it is not only common but it is univer- sal. It has become a *dastur* (settled practice).

Q.—How do they dispose of the surplus opium obtained by shortweight ?

A.—As far as I know they sell it to any person who wants it. A man who used to consume 4 tolas a month and whose ra tion is now being reduced by the enlightened policy of Govern ment to 12 annas, this man cannot get on with 12 annas weight He purchases this opium. When I was in North Lakhimpur man actually admitted to me that he can get as much as h likes.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the opium consumer whos rations have been cut supplements his rations by illicit purchas from the mahaldar and smuggler ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any idea as to the price he pays to the mahal dar ?

A.—They used to pay Rs. 4 a tola as the fixed price in Sil sagar.

Q.—I am referring to North Lakhimpur, and I think you were Settlement Officer there?

A.—I [illegible] but I forget it now. I do not like to vent[illegible] [illegible]se things depend upon the conditions of [illegible] a good deal.

Q.—These unregistered opium eaters who buy this surplus opium from the mahaldar pay a high extra rate?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In that case, don't you think that it would be in the interests of these people to bring them into the register to enable them to secure opium at the treasury price, namely Rs. 2 a tola?

A.—Yes, it is most essential.

Q.—You are quite of opinion that it would be advisable to bring these men into the register to save them from poverty?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In Kamrup do you agree that opium is not not at all a problem?

A.—It is a problem among certain of the backward tribes, among the Kacharis, Rabhas. But viewed from the point of the district as a whole, the problem is very small compared with the black spots in other parts of Assam.

Q.—Do you agree that the climate of this place, the temperament of the people of Kamrup and the experience of this district, would not be a safeguide for districts in Upper Assam?

A.—No, it would not be a safeguide at all. The people in this district are very different from the Upper Assam Assamese.

Q.—Did you enquire if there were any riots in North Lakhimpur opium shops when you were a Settlement Officer there for want of opium in the shop?

A.—I do not know of any. I seem to remember that I heard something about one case of rioting. But I have no personal knowledge.

Q.—Can you state any good results of the present Government policy?

A.—The good result of the policy is that the total consumption of opium has certainly fallen a good deal and the [illegible] Assam who were consuming opium from illicit [illegible] taking opium from licit sources and they are also [illegible] consuming much less opium than they used to. The [illegible] tity has gone down enormously. The [illegible] they used to take has been definitely [illegible]

Q.—Do you agree that a large number of people have been ruined for having to pay high rates to the mahaldar?

A.—I would not like to answer that question. I do not know how you can say whether any people have been ruined. I doubt it.

Q.—What I mean is this. You can get treasury opium for Rs. 2 a tola and the unregistered opium-eaters have to pay Rs. 10?

A.—I consider from my own experience these people have reduced their rations.

Q.—Do you believe that the cut should go on?

A.—I have already said that the cut should be discontinued. I think we have now got down pretty well to bed rock.

Q.—Can you say from your personal knowledge whether opium offences have increased of late?

A.—I believe they have. But I have not got the statistics with me now.

Q.—Is picketing in Kamrup resorted to by the Congress leaders of any consequence in checking the habit of opium?

A.—We have got no picketing at present. And I hope that we will have no Congress leaders any more but only leaders of the Assamese nation.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—What is your reason for stopping this ten per cent. cut?

A.—My reason is that I have a considerable amount of sympathy, I confess, for the consumer. I have a great respect for personal liberty and if a habit is not a degrading habit and if it is indulged in in moderation, I do not see why the habit should not be allowed to go on. The people who were taking opium, who cannot do without opium, they will get their quota, no matter what you do. You are merely a little province here packed away in one corner but the problem you have set about to tackle is an All-India problem. Whatever you do you cannot cut out the smuggling of opium and the smuggling trade is, in my opinion, like every other smuggling trade in every other part of the world, very highly organised.

Q.—The opium-eaters are not habituated to the ten per cent. reduction?

A.—I consider they are not.

Q.—Then it is a forced reduction?

A.—Yes. He has had two cuts. One in the non-co-operation days on account of the temperance movement. They have done very good work, I admit. And secondly by this policy.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Don't you think that by opening the register we shall be encouraging the habit?

A.—I do not think so.

Q.—Will not the people try and get more opium?

A.—I do not think so. Not if the leaders of the people explain to them that this is only a device in order to get the unregistered consumers into the register.

Q.—You said that the preventive staff ought to be abolished?

A.—I don't say they all should be abolished. But I am not in favour of any attempt to increase the staff. If you are going to put down smuggling you said that you have to increase the preventive staff. My opinion is it is perfectly useless to increase them. If you open the registers and you give up the present—may I call it also a futile policy I do not think smuggling will increase.

Q.—In that case how will you reduce the demand for opium?

A.—That can be reduced. The demand will be satisfied by licit sources.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Had you any opportunity of watching the working of this policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how long?

A.—I watched it for one year in 1928-29.

Q.—Your opinion is based on your experience of that year?

A.—Yes. Also of my experience of six months after that when I was a Settlement Officer and from what little I have seen of this district. I follow the proceedings of the Council and the able speeches, shall I say, that you make in the Council. Only I have not seen as much as I should have

Q.—May I know what you mean by—"I have had for many years very decided opinions regarding the present policy of Government" ?

A.—My opinion for many years is that the present policy of Government is not only impractical but also futile and ridiculous.

Q.—You hold the decided opinion from your experience before working the policy ?

A.—From the time that this policy was introduced I was among those who were consulted before the policy was introduced.

Q.—Do you think that Mr. Patton, who has been for a long time a Deputy Commissioner has had better experience in these matters than yourself ?

A.—Yes undoubtedly.

Q.—Do you know Mr. Mills the Deputy Commissioner ? In his district also the opium problem is acute ?

A.—I do not think it is so acute as in Sibsagar. I do not think that Mr. Mills had any very large experience at all. He was in the Naga Hills.

Q.—Do you think it has succeeded in preventing the younger generation from acquiring the habit ?

A.—I think I have already said it has done good in reducing the total consumption and the younger generation is certainly being prevented from taking to the habit to a considerable extent.

Q.—Do you not think it is a great gain to have the rising generation free from this habit ?

A.—I think it is a very great gain.

Q.—It is one of the outcomes of this policy ?

A.—Yes, it is one of the outcomes. But I think it could have been achieved in other ways.

Q.—I can put it like this. This policy has been successful in reducing the total consumption from all sources in the province as well as in limiting the number of younger people who have taken to the drug. That is Mr. Patton's view ?

A.—I agree to that.

Q.—And the evils of this policy are that it has encouraged the mahaldars to get some money to which they are not legally entitled?

A.—That is one of the evils.

Q.—And correspondingly the poor opium-eaters had to pay more for their opium than they need have paid?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That has effected their pecuniary position? It is also possible that all this money which has gone to the mahaldars might have gone to the Government revenues and that it would have directly benefitted the tax-payer?

A.—Yes, exactly so. But there is one greater evil. That is this policy has directly encouraged the people to look upon the opium laws as laws which could be broken with impunity.

Q.—Do you mean to say that since the introduction of this policy the lessees have become more dishonest than they were before?

A.—Yes. That is one point. But the main point is that the ordinary people, the ordinary cultivator and the ordinary *raiyat*, he has no scruple whatsoever in defying the law which has been laid down by the Legislative Council regarding the opium question. A policy of this nature, just like prohibition in any place, encourages the ordinary citizen to disregard law. And the result is that he is disobedient.

Q.—What has the policy got to do with it?

A.—Because this policy has been imposed on one section of the community by another and this section did not believe it was a bad habit and they now say that they do not care for the law.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the opium-eaters of this province have revolted against this policy and take the consequence?

A.—I should not say so much. But the general idea would be: let Government do what they like, we *are* going to get opium. The same thing probably is the case in America where those who would not leave off drinking say: Hell with them I am going to drink.

Q.—What is the percentage of opium-eaters to the entire population?

A.—I could not tell you.

Mr. DAWSON :—It is less than one per cent.

Mr. C. S. MULLAN : As far as I am concerned, I would not take it that way. You should [redacted] consider only Kamrup Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. That is the area over which you want to see the percentage. The rest of the province is not worth bothering about.

Q.—Don't you think that within all legislation there would be at least two per cent. who would not agree to it.

A.—I myself am not an opium-eater. Yet I disagree with the policy and you will not include me in the two per cent.

Q.—May I know how you can explain this fact : that the opium-eaters come forward and tell us that they are taking opium from such and such source ; how do they dare say all that instead of trying to conceal these facts ?

A.—I generally find that opium-eaters are boasters. I met a very interesting old Kachari lady. She took pride in telling me she was taking opium before the railways came in, before the earthquake and so forth. I was inclined to think she was a very valuable person.

Q.—They don't mind telling you that they disregard the law ?

A.—They don't mind. They do disregard it.

Q.—But do they tell you the sources from which and the persons from whom they get opium ?

A.—They have never told me.

Q.—They have told the committee ?

A.—I have never yet been told from where they get their opium.

Q.—Did you enquire where they got their opium from ?

A.—I have never even seen them.

Q.—Did you ask your Excise Superintendent about it ?

A.—No.

Q.—What will be your attitude if we can place before you the names of the lessees ?

A.—My attitude would be, it is impossible to prove it and the best thing to do is to do nothing.

Q.—That is the general attitude you have been taking ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That would be the attitude of most of the district officers?

A.—Most district officers who have had their hearts broken by this policy would adopt the same policy.

Q.—Is this attitude not largely responsible for the evils?

A.—I entirely deny that. When this policy was introduced first we had strict instructions from the Excise Commissioner that it is very important that every violation of law must be prosecuted, that licenses should be cancelled and another honest mahaldar should be put in. I cancelled 20 licences at least at various times and forfeited the security deposit. What is the result? The same thing repeats itself. It is absolutely useless.

Q.—You do not do it?

A.—At present I do it under mere great pressure. As long as a man is reasonable I let him remain.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—What is meant by reasonable?

A.—Shortweight of 14 annas for 16 annas. A really dishonest man is one who gives 10 annas. If I had sufficient evidence against him, I should not give him the shop.

THE CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—Is it not a fact that a man who believes in a thing can do much more than one who does not believe in it?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—Therefore, Government has had to do with officers who themselves believed that this policy would be unsuccessful?

A.—Certainly, yes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Do you think that the excise staff under you also share the same view and have the same mentality?

A.—I do not know what the mentality of the excise staff is.

Q.—I mean in this matter of detecting the mahaldars?

A.—I do not know what their mentality is. It is a thing which is very difficult to ascertain. Like myself they get an order and they carry it out. What the real philosophy is I did not venture to enquire.

Q.—According to you the other alternative is to throw open the registers?

A.—I think that will be in accordance with the principles laid down by the experts in the League of Nations Commission who have seen the whole world and conditions in every country.

Q.—Did the League of Nations visit India?

A.—They may have not visited India. But the principles guiding the question are the same.

Q.—So you would have the registers re opened?

A.—Certainly.

Q.—So that those who have money to buy opium may have it for his pleasure just as you have a peg of whiskey?

A.—You have misunderstood me. I have spoken to you very candidly. I told you that a tola a month for man is harmless. But six or seven *tolas* is definitely bad. That is why I believe in registration so that individual rations can be limited.

Q.—Do you believe in registration of the persons who have the liquor habit?

A—If it was prevalent in excess in any particular country, I should be almost inclined to say I would believe in it. In my heart of hearts I believe that ultimately it is public opinion which can stop or put down a widespread habit of this nature. Registration I think is useful for that purpose and I would agree to it. But I believe that ultimately the authority that should decide it is public opinion.

Q.—Don't you think that a large majority of public opinion in this province is in favour of total prohibition of this habit?

A.—I think among the educated classes it would be so. But they are very small.

Q.—Only among the educated classes?

A.—Most of the Assamese that I know, are—what shall I call them—extremely tolerant people.

Q.—Do you mean to say that the majority of the people in Assam is in favour of continuing this policy?

A.—I cannot say that. I did not take a census of their opinions.

Q.—Don't you think that a large majority are in favour of the abolition of this habit?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—If that is the case, would you rather favour the continuance of the policy in the interest of the few ?

A.—I object to one section imposing its will on another when public opinion is still not organised to induce that other section to give up the habit.

Q.—What is the percentage of literacy in this province amongst the people of the Assam Valley ?

A.—Speaking off hand, I can tell you the percentage is not very high. It has to be worked in different ways. People under 5 years have to be left out altogether. Probably without consulting my figures I cannot tell you accurately. But I think, the percentage of both males and females may be about 10 per cent.

Q.—What would be the income ?

A.—That is rather a difficult question. It is no good giving a guess This has been worked out before with varying results. I should probably think that Rs. 8 may be the average for the whole population. But this is a rough guess and I may be entirely wrong.

Q.—It would not be more than Rs. 8 ?

A.—I think not.

Q.—And with this income you think it is good to have a tola of opium ?

A.—If a fellow is feeling seedy, having a headache and off colour, and if he thinks that by taking this he will feel well, I do not see any objection to his taking it.

Q.—Then let him take it on medical grounds. But why give him a license ?

A.—I give him a licence because it would be bad for him to take more. By a license you limit him to a reasonable quantity.

Q.—How do you limit it ?

A.—I limit his ration to one tola.

Q.—If he then goes to the smuggler ?

A.—I would limit it by abolishing the present mahaldars.

Q.—Which will you have first ? Will you have the mahaldars go first or will you limit the ration first ?

A.—In my opinion the first thing to be done in this province is to do something about the mahaldar system which I think very rotten.

Q.—Before resorting to this reduction system you must something about the mahaldar system ?

A.—You have got to decide now whether you have reduce or not, that is the business of the Committee. On you decide that, you can take up the question of the mahaldar.

Q.—Do you believe in fixing the ration of the opium-eate first ?

A.—I believe the ration should be fixed within a reasonal limit.

Q.—Who is to fix the reasonable limit ?

A.—It is a difficult point. Personally I should say that should be fixed more or less by a sort of a general consensus public opinion as to what a reasonable amount is. I shou myself think that one tola is a reasonable limit.

Q.—That is the maximum limit ?

A.—Not necessarily. The present rations have been fixe more or less arbitrarily. I think they were fixed on informatio from the gaonburas and the mahaldars and I consider that i was unjust. If a man said that he wanted five tolas it wa fixed at that. Another man said he wanted two tolas and i was fixed at that.

Q.—What was the principle adopted ?

A.—The principle is what the gaonbura said and then the consumer at that time mentioned his requirement under the honest impression that there would be no such "dirty" thing as reduction.

Q.—If the man comes forward and says that it is not enough, that he is taking from the smuggler, would you increase his ration ?

A.—I should be inclined to increase it within reasonable limits and give him his definite requirements. Of course the statement of the consumer would have to be checked and evidence taken. My own idea is that each man should be given what is reasonable necessary to him.

Q.—It has been fixed before. Now they come and say they are taking more ?

A.—But then you have been cutting them these five years and you have reduced 50 per cent. of their rations. The rations were originally all right.

Q.—Therefore, you say, there should be no cut?

A.—I saw a case the other day. The man had originally two tolas and now he has only 12 annas. I should be inclined to see that he gets one tola.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—In other words you want us to follow the principle in Burma, that is to give a reasonable quantity?

A.—I do not know what is the principle in Burma. But that is good.

Q.—It is also the Geneva Commission principle?

A.—I am glad to hear that; they are obviously sensible men.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI —

Q.—You know that in Europe in any country there is a large percentage of educated people and they have a large income. Would you advise there that opium should be removed from the list of poisonous drugs and let them take as much as they want?

A.—In my country there is no opium habit.

Q.—In your country all steps are taken to stop opium. Even doctors do not give opium injection, not even morphia injection?

A.—On the other hand, in my country if you feel ill you have only to go round the corner to a very well equipped hospital. In this country there is no such relief, only you have your vast jungles. Opium is a pain reliever and all humane men must sympathise with a man that suffers from pain. The only thing the poor man here has, is his miserable hut, the impenetrable jungle and a pain in his belly.

The CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Do you know of people who have been opium consumers but have now given up the habit?

A.—I do not know personally. I have heard of them.

Q.—You believe they can give it up?

A.—I believe that is possible.

Q.—If they are pressed by financial difficulty and by some other force from outside, they may be compelled to give up the habit ?

A.—It may be possible. But in the case of an addict it may be so difficult as to be almost impossible.

Q.—We have had before us evidence given that some addicts who have been used to the habit for some 30 or 40 years since have given it up ?

A.—I think it is possible.

Q.—Yesterday we had a certain number of them from Bethna who said that they have given it up on account of economic depression and they would not have it even if opium would be given them free. The mauzadar of Bethna has given us a list of 35 names who have given up the habit and have not taken to it again and he says that there are more like that. Don't you think it is better for them ?

A.—I do not think so. They will probably go back to it again. They may say that they would not take to it but they would do so in a few years ; I do not know.

Q.—If they continued like that would it not be better for them ?

A.—If a man wants opium or wants whiskey, tobaccor cocaine or any other drug and is prepared to pay, no matte, what your legislation is, he will get it. Nothing that the local Government would do and nothing that the Government of India would do will prevent him from getting the drug. Look at the experience of America ?

Q.—That is a matter of opinion. And the question of alcohol in America is different from opium in India ?

A.—But the principle is the same.

Q.—There is a large section of people in England and in America that think that alcohol is not bad. There are also doctors that say that alcohol is not bad. But opium here in this country in Assam is considered to be bad. Public opinion of the educated people is against it and we have found that the mentality of the opium-eaters is also changing. In the previous days they thought it was a luxury which could be taken without any harm to themselves. But now their mentality is changed and they really have come to feel that it is a bad habit ?

A.—Most of the opium-eaters whom I met and whom I asked if they would give it up tell me No.

Q.—Again in other countries the liquor interests are very strong and they can afford to make propaganda for their trade. Here in Assam the position is different. The opium-eaters are poor and illiterate. Therefore it is the duty of the better section to see that these poor people do not fall into this vice?

A.—There is some confusion of the issue. In England the liquor interests are owned by the people whereas in India the opium interest is entirely in the hands of the Government.

Q.—But Government is not using the opium trade as a means of or a propaganda for getting money. Government want to adopt this policy, wants that this habit should be finally abolished. Therefore, it seems that the problem of alcohol in other countries is different from the problem of opium in India, particularly Assam.

A.—In England, as you pointed out correctly, the liquor interests are very strong. It is their business to push the sales; they make propaganda for that purpose and to make people drink more beer and more whisky. But in this country on the other hand the opium interests are with the Government themselves who are not conducting any propaganda.

Q.—But the propaganda they can do is to say, as they are saying, that opium is bad and it is better for the people to give it up. So it is a different thing altogether?

A.—I think if you compare them, the comparison will be in favour of the opium-eater.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI.—

Q.—Mr. Patton says: "Reopening the registers would result in a flood of applications, many of which would be from non-consumers, who have now learnt that an opium pass is a commercial proposition and money is to be made out of its possession". Do you agree with that?

A.—Yes, there would be a very large number of applications.

Q.—From many non-consumers?

A.—Probably from a certain number of them. They will have to be weeded out.

Q.—Supposing the policy continues, then it stands to reason that registers should not be opened once more?

A.—I think, if you are going to continue the policy, the sooner you bring it to its natural conclusion the better. The sooner you close down and give [illegible] to the smuggler the better.

Q.—Then you will have only the smuggler to tackle?

A.—You can try. But you cannot stop him.

Q.—What I am asking is that if we decide to continue the policy then it stands to reason that we should issue no new passes?

A.—Except possibly to people who come from provinces that are following a more rational policy in this matter.

Q.—You mean except in the case of immigrants?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If they do not get any opium then they will leave the province?

A.—I assure you they will get opium all right.

Q.—Why do you issue gun licences and why restrict their free possession by everybody?

A.—I issue gun licences in order that those people who are worthy members of society should have them and those who are dacoits and *badmashes* should not. That is to say, to protect the better elements from the worst.

Q.—Is that your idea of keeping a limit of issue?

A.—There is no limit.

Q.—Have you not refused a certain pleader in one year and given him the license next year?

A.—In one year I may have had reasons to consider that a certain pleader was a menace to society and, therefore, I may have refused him. As soon as the menace is over in the next year I may have granted him the license. A gun is not a habit.

Q.—Is it a necessity?

A.—You cannot compare a gun with a drug. In the Mikir hills when I was a Subdivisional Officer at Golaghat, four or five years ago, we got information that there were at least 20 guns unlicenced. I got permission from Government and sent word round saying that "if you produce these guns you won't be punished and you would get licences". It is thus I kept control.

Q.—You say that in the Mikir hills you came to know that there were some people who had guns without licences and you granted them licences in order to have control?

A.—That is the idea.

Q.—Some might think that it is necessary to issue licences in the case of opium also so that to bring them under control?

A.—Yes, that is what it comes to.

Q.—If you do not issue gun license to a man you have no control whether he has one gun or more. But if you issue licenses then you know that he has got a gun and you know also where he has it. The argument of the gun license applies to opium also?

A.—To a certain extent.

No 30.

The Committee next examined —

MAULVI ZAHIRUL HUQ, Sudbivisional Officer, Barpeta.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—In your statement you said something about restoring the cut. Supposing you were the officer who is to judge on the restoration of the cut what is the maximum you would allow?

A.—I would grant according to the circumstances of the pass-holder.

Q.—Take the worst case that you like?

A.—Every case has to be decided individually. I would ask him

Q.—Supposing he says he wants 8 tolas?

A.—My point is if he wants 5 tolas and he has got only 3, I would give him what is necessary.

Q.—Will you give him the 5 tolas?

A.—Yes if I am satisfied I would be prepared to give him any quantity he requires according as I consider necessary.

Q.—Talking of the registers your idea I imagine is to make the quotas permanent?

A.—When you give a new pass it must be permanent.

Q.—You know that persons over 50 are not registered?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then you were talking, , of those under the age of 50?

A.—Yes.

Q.—When the registers are opened and new passes are issued that quota should never be reduced?

A.—It may be reduced by periodical examination. But I said that permanent passes should be given, not temporary passes which are to be renewed every year.

Q.—Are you in favour of reducing the quota or making passes permanent?

A.—The passes should be permanent but the quota given would be dealt with like those mentioned in the other passes.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—What are the circumstances which you will consider for fixing the rations of an opium-eater?

A.—We will have to take his opinion, consider his health and other evidence.

Q.—What will you do with new men?

A.—The Civil Surgeon should be consulted.

Q.—The Civil Surgeon says that it is not possible for him to fix the quota?

A.—In most cases we will have to decide by the statement of the *kania* and the witnesses he produces.

Q.—Are you in favour of issuing any passes to persons below the age of 50?

A.—I have said 25 in my statement.

Q.—You are prepared to give passes to those over 25?

A.—Provided they are addicts and they are getting an illicit supply?

Q.—What is the criterion by which you will determine that he is an addict?

A.—He will submit his application and then we will enquire.

Q.—How will you come to a decision?

A.—If it is decided to open the registers, the fact should be widely circulated. These people will come forward with their applications and witnesses. We will have to take evidence as to who is an addict.

Q.—If a man takes opium for 5 years?

A.—Yes he should be given.

Q.—If he takes for 4 years, even 3 years?

A.—Yes

Q.—About these 80 unregistered consumers that you have mentioned in your statement, are you satisfied that they are real consumers?

A.—Yes

Q.—Are there some amongst them who take opium for trafficking?

A.—So far as my information goes they want it for themselves

Q.—Are you not aware of the fact that in the list of the registered consumers also there are persons who do not really consume their quota but sell to others?

A.—There are some people who get their supply from the registered consumers.

Q.—That is why you want to revise the list?

A.—Yes.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA.—

Q.—Do you think that the increase of opium from illicit sources is on the increase?

A.—My recent experience in my subdivision is that it is not on the increase

Q.—On what basis do you say that the Government policy has not proved a failure?

A.—Because it has reduced opium consumption and prevented the younger generation from becoming opium addicts.

Q.—Am I to understand from your evidence that you are not in favour of continuing the policy of ten per cent. cut for the next 5 years?

A.—I am in favour of it with certain restrictions that I have mentioned, regarding the opening of the registers and revising the rations.

Q.—I think you are of opinion that the rations of opium-eaters whose rations have been cut down during the last five years may also be increased provided they can prove that the present quota is not adequate for them?

A.—Yes.

Q.—This should be done with the help of a committee?

A.—Not exactly a committee; but by local enquiry.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—Do you realise that the opening of the registers would encourage people to take to the habit?

A.—No. Only those people who are addicts will be granted passes?

Q.—Would it not encourage the people?

A.—Some people will come with bogus applications but they will not be granted. Every case will have to be enquired into and decided.

Q.—Will there be no increase in the number of applications for passes if you go on opening in the register?

A.—There may be some increase.

Examined by Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You say you have 80 unregistered consumers. Would you register all of them or would you discriminate between them?

A.—Every case will be enquired into. My information is that there are roughly 80. I will examine each case and it may that some may have to be rejected.

Q.—If you knew that some persons had applied before and their applications had been previously rejected after enquiry would you take them in now?

A.—If they want and satisfy me that they are taking illicit supply, it is better they should get their licit supply.

Q.—You will make individual enquiry?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How do you make that enquiry? Do you think that any one will admit who gives him illict supply?

A.—Some of them will admit if they have a chance of getting opium.

Q.—Supposing you rejected a man this year and he comes next year?

A.—It is very difficult to give a general view. Each should be considered separately.

Q.—You want a certain principle?

A.—I will have to see his appearance, his health and then enquire.

Q.—If after enquiry you find that these persons formerly appeared and were not granted passes, would you make a further enquiry again?

A.—If I think it necessary, I would.

Q.—Would you open the registers now as a last chance or would you repeat it?

A.—The registers should be opened now and closed for some years.

Q.—In your view, this cut policy should continue?

A.—I agree, with the modifications that I have suggested.

Q.—Do you know that in 1929 it was said that the registers were opened for the last time?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—But the registers were opened twice before?

A.—I have followed this question only for the last two or three years. Before that I was in Goalpara and I do not know what happened.

Q.—Are opium-eaters generally reliable in the statements they make?

A.—It is generally supposed that they are not. But in some cases I have also found reliable opium-eaters. In the courts pleaders generally say that the *kanias* are unreliable persons.

Q.—Most of the persons who require their rations are generally over 50?

A.—For those who are over 50 there should be no cut. For those between 50 and 25 if they have had a cut below their requirements then the ration should be increased.

Q.—In order to decide that, you depend on the statement of the opium-eater?

A.—And other sources of enquiry.

Q.—What sort of enquiry?

A.—I may ask the mahaldar what quantity he gets and I may also ask the villager; that is I would make local enquiries.

Q.—If you ask the mahaldar he would say that he is taking a greater quantity because he is interested in selling shortweight?

A.—A person may be a mahaldar now but not next time.

Q.—You don't think the mahaldars are disinterested?

A.—To-day there will be one man and to-morrow another man will be there.

Q.—Do you think that they would give up the habit if they do not get their supply?

A.—Some may be compelled.

Q.—If after enquiry you find that there [illegible] me unregistered consumers who are able to give [illegible] on give passes to them?

A.—If there is such a case, I would [illegible] the

Q.—Why do you want to bring them into the register? Is it because you want to control them?

A.—To stop illicit supply from mahaldars and to stop smuggling.

Q.—We shall proceed one by one. First you want to stop the supply he is having from the mahaldars?

A.—I want him to get licit supply.

Q.—Is it your intention that he should pay the price to the treasury opium in which case it goes to the Government?

A.—I want everyone to get licit supply. I do not want the mahaldar to save two annas worth and give it to an unregistered consumer. I want to control it.

Q.—You grant gun licenses?

A.—I do not.

Q.—You recommend their issue?

A.—I recommend some cases.

Q.—What is the idea of issuing a gun license?

A.—I do not issue gun licenses.

No. 40.

(After Lunch.)

Next the Committee examined SRIJUT MOHENDRA PRASAD DUTT, Officiating, Excise Superintendent, Darrang and Nowgong.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You say that this policy is a failure inasmuch as it has driven the consumer from licit to illicit sources. What do you mean by illicit sources?

A.—The consumers have now two cuts, one the cut by the policy and the other the cut that the mahaldar makes. The mahaldars get their savings by selling shortweight. Generally the non-pass-holders get smuggled opium. A few of the registered consumers get smuggled opium. Generally all smuggled opium is meant for the non-pass-holders.

Q.—Do we understand you to say that those people who have got passes do not resort to licit smuggled opium?

A.—Only to a very little extent.

Q.—And smuggled opium is supplied mostly to the non-pass-holders ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What is the basis of your information ? Is it all guess ?

A.—Not guess. The figures of non-pass-holders are already given by the Deputy Commissioners at Nowgong and Darrang. There are 2,500 pass-holders in the Nowgong district and about 1,000 in the Darrang district.

Q.—Supposing that is true how could you know that these non-pass-holders do not buy opium from the mahaldars ?

A.—They do to some extent.

Q.—How do you ascertain that the registered consumers who do not have enough rations buy their rations to a less extent from smuggled opium ?

A.—I know it from my experience and I get reports.

Q.—All these reports are hearsay reports ? Can you be sure of it ?

A.—These surplus savings are generally supplied to the registered consumers, and the non-registered consumers take them to a small extent.

Q.—Why do you say that ?

A.—From my experience.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Do you mean to say that the surplus opium is distributed by the mahaldars to the registered consumers and the registered consumers supply it to the unregistered consumers ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Supposing I say that the pass-holders who have their rations cut get them supplemented from the savings of the mahaldar to the extent of three-fourths ?

A.—I cannot give an exact idea. To a less extent, that is all I can say.

Q.—That is only a guess ?

A.—It is only a guess ; I cannot give an exact idea.

Q.—You have said that this policy is a partial success especially in respect of the young people. You mean that they have been prevented from taking [illegible]

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know of any young man that has been inclined to take to the habit but has been prevented from doing so on account of the stringent measures of the policy ?

A.—I have not heard of any.

Q.—Have you any report of new men taking to it ?

A.—I have no report. Formerly they use to take but due to the introduction of this policy they do not.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—How long have you been Superintendent at Tezpur and Nowgong ?

A.—Two months.

Q.—Before that where were you ?

A.—In the Special Branch.

Q.—How long ?

A.—Since 1927.

Q.—What time in the Special Branch ?

A.—For six years.

Q.—Your experience of district operations is very slight ?

A.—Yes.

The CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You were Inspector before ?

A.—Yes, in the Special Branch.

Q.—You say the cut policy can be continued ?

A.—I think this should be discontinued for another 5 years.

Q.—After five years ?

A.—This can be contintied if it is required.

Q.—Why do you say that ?

A.—For the sake of experiment.

Q.—Supposing you experiment and continue as you do now ?

A.—I am not in a position to say now what result you wi get.

Q.—Are you in a position to say this : if you continue the policy for the next five years there will be a large amount of smuggled opium coming into the district ?

A.—I think in my opinion smuggling will increase.

Q.—Do you think that smuggling has increased or decreased uring the last five years ?

A.—It has increased. Of course at the present moment it s dull.

Q.—On account of the economic depression ?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Or is it due to the activity of the staff ?

A.—Due to the prevention of smuggling and dullness of rade.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—If these smugglers are punished heavily and the staff also is vigilant don't you think that the smugglers would be afraid to come to Assam ?

A.—They may take different routes They do it very cleverly and scientifically.

Q.—Can you give us any idea ?

A.—There are different modes of smuggling. Some opium comes by railway parcels, some by postal parcels, some by steamers and some by train and by land route and also by foot tracks in the hills and by river.

Q.—We have heard of all that.

A.—There are cases where opium was hidden in vegetable parcels in rail, I have detected a case like that.

Q.—Do you suspect that there are men in the province who are supposed to be smugglers ?

A.—There are persons who are connected with others that remain outside. The main persons remain aloof.

Q.—Have you certain names in your confidential reports ?
A.—Yes.

Q.—Now the idea of foreign smuggled opium is simply your guess ?

A.—No. It is from facts and figures.

Q.—Your facts and figures do not show that a large number of smuggled opium has come in last year ?

A.—Nobody can give

Q.—It may be more or less?

A.—As far as we have seen smuggling is on the increase. But we cannot give an accurate idea.

Q.—Supposing it is only as large as it used to be and that because there is a staff, it is being detected?

A.—We cannot say that smuggling does not exist. Only the other day 9 seers were detected by the Special Branch. All cases may not have been detected. But smuggling exists.

Q.—To what extent?

A.—The facts and figures are before you and I have given reasons in my written reply how it is going on.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—In detecting smuggling cases do you rely a great deal on chance? By accident you may get some information is that not the case?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not owing largely to a chance and luck that you are able to detect a case?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you often find that it takes a long time to work up smuggling cases?

A.—It takes a long time.

Q.—Can you give me some idea?

A.—It takes three to six months' time to work up a good case.

Q.—You get your information, you have got to work up the case and you have to use a considerable degree of skill?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have been asked to give an estimate of the amount of opium smuggled but not detected?

A.—That is difficult to give.

Q.—You look at page 8, paragraph 14, "Facts and figures about opium in Assam". You will find some of the various methods used by smugglers for bringing opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Take the case of a suit case which was searched and which was found to contain opium. It is possible there were other suit cases in that year which might have contained opium?

A.—Certainly it is possible.

Q.—You did nc . . . year, you did not examine all the . . .

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—Nor all the *sarees*!

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NATH GOHAIN :—

Q.—You detected the Marwari case at Jorhat?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you tell us what time it took you to do that?

A.—Three to six months.

Q.—You gather your information from those who break off from the smugglers?

A.—My information is *quite independent* of the smugglers or the mahaldars.

Q.—Why should that man give you the information? Was he displeased with the smuggler or does he get a greater reward from the Excise staff?

A.—Because he was known to me.

Q.—Is he a personal relation to you?

A.—No.

Q.—How did you come across him and get the information?

A.—I happened to *meet him*. There are some people who co-operate with Government and there are others who do not.

Q.—And I take it that it is your luck that you met him?

A.—He is one of the persons who co-operates with Government.

MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY :—

Q.—Did you offer him any temptation?

A.—No.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—After the case was finished he was rewarded?

A.—Yes.

SRIJUT MAHENDRA NAT[illegible] [illegible]AIN :—

Q.—Do you get inf[illegible] . . . smuggled cases?

A.—I do not . . .

Q.—You consider it is very difficult?

A—Yes.

Q.—There is every possibility of the smugglers getting scent of your pursuit?

A.—Yes, because we have a limited number of people.

Q.—Do you know of any cases being spoiled like that?

A.—There are of course cases in which we were disappointed. We are not successful in every case.

Q.—Do you know of any case in which you spent a lot of time and the smugglers got scent of it by some chance or other?

A.—There was a case in which I had to co-operate with the district Inspector and both of us worked on the border of the district. But we were not successful.

Q.—I want to know the time it took you in the Golaghat case.

A.—I think three to four months' time.

Q.—You had to work in both the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur?

A.—Yes.

Q.—How many officers worked like that?

A.—Myself and another senior Inspector.

Q.—Don't you consider it is a very clever detection?

A.—I cannot judge myself.

Q.—Have you experience as a district Excise officer?

A.—Yes, in the Lakhimpur district.

Q.—Do you want to re-open the registers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how long?

A.—At least for six months they should be kept open.

Q.—Why?

A.—It must be widely published.

Q.—It was widely published before?

A.—It was done in a hurry.

Q.—Any other reason?

A.—I find from the figures that there is a large number of unregistered consumers. Therefore, it is advisable.

Q.—Even if you re-open now a few years later you will still find a certain number cropping up?

A.—This time you should give a final warning that there will be no further chance.

Q—Do you think that all unregistered opium-eaters would come in?

A—I expect so.

Q.—If there are some consumers left behind?

A.—It should be closed this time once for all. It should not be opened again.

Q.—What about the cuts?

A.—I want a halt for five years more as an experiment.

Q.—What is the harm if you go on?

A.—There will be a lot of trouble from the consumers.

Q.—Don't you think the idea of the policy is very good?

A—That is not the only cut. These people have two cuts, one from the mahaldar and the other from the policy.

Q.—Don't you think that the consumers would rest content with the cut?

A.—They must supplement it anyhow.

Mr E. S. ROFFEY:—

Q.—How many cases of shortweight were convicted in the Darrang district last year?

A.—About three cases.

Q.—And Nowgong?

A.—Four cases.

Q.—Do you agree that shortweight is universal?

A.—It is not universal: I have already stated in my reply.

Q.—How many shops are there in Darrang?

A.—35.

Q.—And in Nowgong?

A.—41.

Q.—You say that shortweight is not universal?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you consider that (3+4 or) 7 cases in (35+41 or) 76 shops is quite good detection or not?

A.—This is not the only work that we have. We have other work to do.

Q.—I know that perfectly well. Do you consider that 7 cases in 76 shops is good detection?

A.—It may not be. But the staff is not adequate to cope with all the cases.

Q.—Then you wish an increase in the staff?

A.—Yes. I have already stated that.

Q.—Is there great difficulty in detecting these cases?

A.—Yes. The mahaldars and lessees have got their men to watch our movements.

Q.—Do you say that the policy of Government is partially unsuccessful because of the short-weight practice?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Therefore, is it not one of the first duties of your staff to check this shortweight?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is one of your most important duties?

A.—Yes. But they have other duties to do.

Q.—What are those duties?

A.—The District Superintendent is generally confined to his office and he is solely responsible for the management of the office. The Circle Inspectors are to detect regular cases such as the illicit sale of smuggled opium, cultivation of poppy, *ganja* and all sorts of cases.

Q.—How many cases of poppy cultivation have you found during the last five years?

A.—Six poppy cases from 1925-26 to 1932-33 in the Darrang district.

Q.—Surely there is other important work to do?

A.—We have the quarterly inspections of shops.

Q.—You could detect short-weight cases at the same time as you do the inspections, I suppose?

A.—Supposing I am in Tezpur and to-morrow I have to go to another place. These people will get scent of it.

Q.—You need not go in a red painted motor car?

A.—They somehow get scent of it as soon as an officer has started. I know that telegrams used to be sent to the next mahaldar saying that "a big *peepa* (cask) has been sent, send another small one." These are their code words by which they warn the next mahaldar.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Has there been any case that proves that these codes have been used?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What cases?

A.—While I was in Dibrugarh subdivision one mahaldar sent to his salesman a similar telegram. It meant the Excise Superintendent is coming. The latter part of the telegram was superfluous. This was brought to the notice of the Excise Commissioner also.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—I can sympathise with you and your staff that it is very difficult to detect these cases. But you have heard the evidence that were given before us both at Nowgong and Tezpur and you have surely heard witness after witness saying that the excise staff is corrupt. Don't you think that the non-detection of these cases supports that evidence?

A.—I have been here only for 2 months.

Q.—You heard Mr. Mullan this morning. He said he was sick and tired of cancelling licenses and he was not taking much interest in giving severe punishments because of the fact that one mahaldar was just as dishonest as another mahaldar? Is that your reason also for not detecting many cases?

A.—All the mahaldars are not uniformly dishonest.

Q.—Some are more dishonest?

A.—I mean some are honest and some are dishonest.

Q.—There is one other point. Can you suggest any remedy to solve this difficult question of shortweight?

A.—A larger margin of profit may be given and the staff may be strengthened.

Q.—These are your only two suggestions?

A.—Also respectable persons may be brought as

Q.—What is your idea of a respectable persons?

A.—Fairly educated and respectable.

Q.—Did you hear the evidence of an *ex*-mahaldar at Nowgong Girish Chandra Barua? He was a respectable and educated man, was he not?

A.—I do not know about his education.

MR. DAWSON:—

Q.—You have had experience of B A's. as mahaldars?

A.—There was a B.A.

Q.—Every bit as dishonest as the others?

A.—Yes. He was convicted.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY:—

Q.—Would you then prefer LL.D's.?

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:-

Q.—You want that the registers should be opened for the last time?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why?

A.—I have already answered that.

Q.—Is it because these unregistered consumers resort to smuggled opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is your only reason?

A.—They should not resort to illegal means.

Q.—Then after five years if you get another batch of unregistered consumers what will you do?

A.—I have already stated that the fact should be published widely and that I am not in favour of re-opening again. If people are found consuming opium again after the registers are now opened then I would ask the Excise officers to take steps against them.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—What sort of action?

A.—So as to prevent smuggled opium, they should be brought to book, prosecuted and convicted.

Q.—Then you will not ask Government to open the registers again?

A.—This should be the last time.

Q.—You want it to be kept open for six months?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Any unregistered consumers found after that you will have them criminally prosecuted?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What prevents you from doing that now?

A.—We have already got a good number of unregistered consumers now and if you re-open the registers their number will decrease. Our staff also is inadequate.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—In 1929 the registers were re-opened?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It was then clearly mentioned that that was the last time?

A.—Yes. Let them be given another and a last chance.

Q.—If the staff is increased you will be ready to take action even from now?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You will prosecute those who possess opium illicitly even now?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Even now you have got that power?

A.—If you increase the staff then there will be more detections.

Q.—Do you mean to say that you did not prosecute any man because there are a large number of unregistered consumers now?

A.—We do prosecute now. But we cannot do it in greater numbers because our staff is limited.

Q.—You are in the Special Branch?

A.—I was in the Special Branch.

Q.—Could you say which is greater, the inter-district smuggling or the smuggling from outside into the province?

A.—Smuggling from outside is larger.

Q.—Can you say who are the persons who generally smuggle opium from outside?

A.—Marwaris, Chinese, Nepalese, up-country [illegible] and Punjabees.

Q.—Do they sell to the mahaldars or do they directly go and sell to the consumer ?

A.—They generally sell through their agents and there are middlemen engaged for the business.

Q.—These middlemen also are Marwaris and others ?

A.—Not necessarily. There are Assamese also.

Q.—They do not smuggle opium through the mahaldars ?

A.—Only one particular case I know in which the mahaldar got smuggled opium. It is the case of an Assamese in Lakhimpur district.

Q.—Where did he get it from ?

A.—There was another Marwari close to his shop who got the opium. He was not a mahaldar.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—You are the seniormost Inspector of the Excise Department ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have been about 26 years in this department ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are now Officiating Superintendent in the Darrang district ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You were also officiating as Superintendent in several other districts ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But in one spell you have worked as Inspector of Excise in the Special Branch for a number of years ?

A.—About 6 years I worked.

Q.—You were stationed at Tinsukia ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—For how many years were you stationed at Tinsukia ?

A.—For 4 to 5 years nearly.

Q.—You know that Tinsukia is a very big centre of opium-eaters ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you aware that there are a large number of unregistered opium-eaters ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know that the shop there was settled with a graduate when the Government wanted to try graduates as lessees ? He was removed sometime before on account of certain offences ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Probably he lost his deposit also?

A.—Not forfeited.

Q.—There is another Inspector of Excise under the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you work in harmony with the district staff as a special Inspector?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You are not supposed to take your orders from the Deputy Commissioner?

A.—In district work we are to work under the orders of the Deputy Commissioner.

Q.—Is it your primary duty to check shortweight or illegal possession of opium within the district? You were stationed at Tinsukia. Was it your duty to check shortweight in opium shops or to enquire about illegal possession of opium: or was it your primary duty in the Special Branch to pay attention to smuggled opium?

A.—Detection of shortweight was not one of our duties but detection of smuggled opium was our primary duty.

Q.—You are aware of the existence of a large number of opium-eaters in the Lakhimpur district?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Probably you are also aware that the notification which was sent out by the Deputy Commissioner, in 1929, was not properly served in the villages?

A.—So I heard.

Q.—Do you know if such notifications were sent to the Excise Inspectors also to inform the mahaldars to give wide publication to the villagers?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you receive any such notice?

A.—No, because I was in the Special Branch.

Q.—From your experience as officiating Superintendent, do you think that it would be in the interests of the consumer to bring his name on the register?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why do you say so?

A.—They are now taking by illegal means.

Q.—Do they sell to the mahaldars or do they directly and sell to the consumer?

A.—They generally sell through their agents and the middlemen engaged for the business.

Q.—These middlemen also are Marwaris and other

A.—Not necessarily. There are Assamese also.

Q.—They do not smuggle opium through the m

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Examined by Rai Bahadur NILAMB

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A.—Yes.

Q.—For how many

A.—For 4 to 5 ye

Q.—You know t eaters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Are you aw tered opium-eaters?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you kn duate when the Go He was removed s

A.—Yes.

Q.—In discharging your duties do you tell the people to give up this habit?

A.—I have not preached to them.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You want that the unregistered consumers should be registered?

A.—Yes

Q.—Do you wish that all those who apply should get passes?

A.—No

Q.—Or would you discriminate?

A.—I will discriminate on the merits of individual cases.

Q.—And would you allow passes to those who applied once before and were refused?

A.—We have to take evidence and act accordingly.

Q.—You will put the applicant on oath?

A.—Not on oath We will make a local enquiry and record statements and send his case to the Civil Surgeon through the Deputy Commissioner.

Q.—If the Civil Surgeon recommends you will give the pass?

A.—Yes.

Q.—That is precisely the procedure which was followed before?

A.—Evidence was not taken before.

Q.—If the evidence of the neighbours and the recommendation of the Civil Surgeon should differ?

A.—We generally send those cases for the orders of the Deputy Commissioner who decides finally.

Q.—You want that this should be done in future?

A.—Yes.

Q.—In that case don't you think that a large number of applications will also have to be rejected?

A.—We will recommend only deserving cases

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—What is your definition of an addict?

A.—There is no definition for addict.

Q.—Supposing a man has been taking opium for the last six months?

A.—In my opinion he is an addict. He may have started taking it for dysentery or for other medical reasons.

Q.—What do you mean by an addict?

A.—I am not in favour of giving passes to a new addict.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—If a man has been taking one tola for one month would you call him an addict?

A.—He may be an addict also.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You will give opium to anyone who has been taking opium before?

A.—Not the beginners.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Who are the beginners?

A.—The man who commences taking opium newly.

Q.—What is meant by newly?

A.—It is for the medical officers to judge.

Q.—Supposing the case of these men are considered by the medical officer and refused?

A.—I would not recommend his case if once refused.

Q.—Do you know how many of these 3,500 persons in your jurisdiction applied for passes before?

A.—I cannot say now.

Q.—Are not these figures obtainable from the applications which were rejected before?

A.—As for Nowgong they were collected from the mauzadars and as for Darrang they were collected from the Circle Inspectors.

Q.—Did any of these apply for passes before?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—Do you know that the pass system was introduced before special officers were appointed in the Excise Department to take a census of the opium-eaters?

A.—I do not think that any additional staff was appointed for this purpose. Some departmental officers did that.

Q.—You did not depend on the mauzadar's opinion before but now you will depend on him?

A.—The figures of non-registered consumers were collected by my predecessors and given to me.

Q.—How many of them have got passes in the meantime?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—You have given your reasons for calling this policy a failure in paragraph 2 of your statement?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If you do not know the extent of smuggled opium in this province how do you advise that this policy should be stopped?

A.—I have not given any estimate.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Do you say there is a large amount of smuggling?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What are the facts and figures?

A.—The number of cases detected and the confidential reports received from time to time and my own experience.

Q.—Will you please tell me what according to you was the amount of smuggled opium which came to the province last year but which you could not detect?

A.—I cannot give you any estimate.

Q.—From your confidential reports?

A.—It may not be possible to estimate it even from the confidential reports.

Q.—Are you not informed that so much quantity is coming in your confidential report?

A.—No. We merely get information that [illegible] is coming.

Q.—Could you give us any idea of the tot[illegible]

A.—I have not made any total

Q.—Can you give any idea?

A.—I have already said that smuggling exists.

Q.—Can you give a rough percentage of the number of cases that you have detected?

A.—That is in the annual report.

MR. DAWSON:—You may take it, on the whole, that the cases reported are the cases detected.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You said that if you get an adequate staff you could do much better? Do you want an increase of the subordinate staff, or the special staff or the Excise Inspectors?

A.—I want inspecting staff.

Q.—Suppose you have three times the present inspecting staff. Could you show appreciable results?

A.—I think so.

No. 41.

The Committee then examined RAI SAHIB P. C. ROY, Special Superintendent of Excise.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN:—

Q.—You have made a statement here that the present opium policy is successful in so far as it has fairly checked the spread of the opium habit amongst the younger generation and has compelled some of the moderate opium-eaters to moderate their dose? Do you think that these people who you say have moderate doses did not supplement their rations from illicit sources?

A.—They may try to occasionally.

Q.—Generally they do not?

A.—The trouble is we have cut the *rations and there is* another cut in the shop.

Q.—But you have said that opium-eaters are taking the rations in moderation?

A.—Some do.

Q.—If some of them have done so do you think that these people do not take opium from illicit sources?

A.—I do not think they take too frequently.

Q.—Do you think that it is easy to get opium from illicit

A.—I think so.

Q.—Are these opium-eaters whose rations have been cut, satisfied with their reduced rations or not?

A.—They are not at all satisfied.

Q.—Anyway they realise that after five more years, they will not get opium any more?

A.—Yes, those below the age of 50. Those who have crossed that age will continue to get.

Q.—If it is a fact that the younger generation are prevented from taking opium, don't you consider that as great gain?

A.—Of course, I consider it a gain.

Q.—Now you say that it is easy to get opium from illicit sources?

A.—Yes.

Q.—By the term illicit sources you mean both opium got from the mahaldars and smuggled opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you give us any idea of the amount of smuggled opium that comes into the province?

A.—It is very difficult to give an idea.

Q.—Don't you think that your activities have frightened the smugglers?

A.—They are changing their methods every time. They are now taking to night marches.

Q.—If you have detected their day marches, their night marches and other activities, then would they not be frightened?

A.—They are a little frightened and that is why they are taking to different methods and different routes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Is it your opinion that the intelligence of the special staff is not sufficient to cope with the intelligence of the smugglers?

A.—The staff is not sufficient to adequately deal with all case that arise. The information that we get nearly always comes late and there is nothing doing.

MR. E S ROFFEY:—

Q.—What increase in the present staff would you call sufficient?

A.—We have had to reduce the staff on account of the Government's desire to effect a ten per cent. cut in the establishment charges. The work of the special staff is different from that of

the district staff. I would suggest the entertainment of 8 spies one for each district, one Inspector more and a Jamadar for the patrol party. I do not think I shall require more.

Q.—You think that if the staff be increased then smuggling could be checked?

A.—Yes it would be greatly checked.

Q.—You are confident about that?

A.—I hope I shall be able to do that.

Q.—Are you in favour continuing the cut?

A.—No.

Q.—Why?

A.—Because if you want to make the policy successful you must remove all the defects. If you merely cut there will be more demand for opium and there will be more short-weight sales.

Q.—The problem of short-weight sales will disappear in five years?

A.—Yes, except to those over 50 years. We may have Government agents to supply opium.

Q.—To people over 50?

A.—Yes. If you have a Government agency for sale then it will greatly check but then there will still be a margin of illicit supply. I can give you an instance of malpractices. If a man wants a tola then one tola and a quarter is written in the books and the man gets only one tola. The balance is kept as surplus savings.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Supposing it is stated in the pass that there will be so many pills for each man?

A.—Still the mahaldars will find some way. You brought in graduates and then they began scientific methods. If you ask one tola then they realise the price for it and then give you only 12 annas.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—But the question is that the problem of short-weight sale will disappear after 5 years. Then provided we adopt another method for supplying those over 50 we shall have to cope with smuggled opium only.

A.—Why do you give shortweight? Because there is demand. So if you keep the demand then there will be more smuggling.

Q.—But smuggling will be prevented by the preventive staff to a great extent ?

A.—You shall have to increase the staff again.

Q.—Don't you think that at that time there will also be a feeling in the minds of the consumers that after all there is no use taking all this trouble and they might as well give it up the habit ? Will there not be such a change in their mentality ?

A.—You will get very few such cases.

Q.—We had a few persons who came before us yesterday who said that they did give it up simply because there was no money ?

A.—Sometimes of course it was done under compulsion for the reason there was no money.

Q.—They told us that they won't take to it again even if they got it free. So in that way their minds will be moulded to the idea that they would not like to take all the risk for opium ?

A.—If you examine an opium-eater then you will find the reason why they started taking opium. So if the reason reappears they will again start taking it.

Q.—You have studied something about mentality. Suppose you stop the cut and open the registers. Will it not create an impression in the minds of the younger generation that after all the Government is not going to abolish opium altogether and that after five more years Government will again reopen the registers and give passes ?

A.—It depends on the desire of the Council. If you want to have total prohibition you can do so. But if you want to see whether people have given up the habit you will have to see whether it is really effective.

Q.—We want to deliver the people from this habit. If we are not able to do this in this generation then we should, at least see that the younger generation is saved ?

A.—It is the spirit of the young men not to take to this habit. I speak generally of educated young men. He knows that it is a bad thing and he has a hatred for opium.

Q.—Do you think that this policy is responsible for that hatred ?

A.—This policy and the temperance movement came afterwards.

Q.—You have been for a long time in the Excise Department ? What is your opinion, has there been a change in the minds of the people towards opium ?

A.—Of course a little change has come.

Q.—Originally they had the idea that opium was a luxury and they used to distribute it on marriage occasions?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But now there is a change in the mentality?

A.—Yes; they do not do it publicly now.

Q.—Is not this change due to the attitude of Government and the temperance movement?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The attitude of the Government and the Council is manifested in this policy?

A.—Yes.

Q.—If we reopen the registers don't you think that it will create a bad effect on the mentality of the younger generation?

A.—You must limit the age before you throw them open.

Q.—What age do you suggest?

A.—Forty.

Q.—What would you do with those below 40?

A.—A person below that age would be able to do without it.

Q.—If you open the registers for those above 40 and close for those below 40, the latter will go to the smuggler?

A.—Of course; if you want to check smuggling effectively, you must stop the demand. Otherwise, if you go on coercing men, it is no use.

Q.—supposing we do not open the registers. Then after five years we have no more opium and for those above the age of 50 we make some other arrangement for supplying them. Then we penalise any man who has got opium below that age and we shall have a staff not only to prevent smuggling but also to penalise illegal possession?

A.—I read a small book on the effects of anti-opium movement in China. I see in that book that all measures have failed and on the other hand it has simply encouraged smuggling.

Q.—The problem there might be quite different. We in Assam are a small province and there is a great public opinion against it?

A.—Opinion and knowledge vary. To the best of my information there is no public opinion like that.

Q.—Why do you say there is no public opinion?

A.—If there is public opinion then why do people take opium shops? You go to Sylhet you will never find any gentlemen having opium shops.

Examined by Mr. DAWSON :—

Q.—What is the last seizure that your staff made ?

A.—Nine seers in possession of Nepalese.

Q.—Where ?

A.—On the railway line east of Golakganj. The case is under trial.

Q.—Was there any other party with them ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were any of them caught ?

A.—There were three men and one was caught with 2½ seers.

Q.—Did you find out where the smugglers came from ?

A.—Cooch Behar.

Q.—You also went to Cooch Behar the other day ?

A.—Yes

Q.—What is the system in Cooch Behar ?

A.—They settle the shops by auction and they give them to the highest bidder. And there is a system that he who takes a *ganja* shop must take opium shop also.

Q.—How many shops are there in the hands of one man ? What is the most glaring case where you find a number of shops settled with one person ?

A.—The largest number is 11 shops with one man.

Q.—Are those shops rationed ?

A.—The Revenue Officer told me they were rationed But if they apply for more he gives it.

Q.—What is the price there ?

A.—Opium is sold at Re. 1-8 a tola and Rs. 110 to Rs 120 per seer of 80 tolas.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—What is the treasury price ?

A.—Rupees 91.

MR. DAWSON :—

Q.—In working up cases in the Special Branch do you find that it takes a long time ?

A.—It takes a very long time.

Q.—Can you give an example ?

A.—There is the Salween steamer case. It took more than six years.

Q.—Instances of any other case?

A.—Many cases. We are usually not able to detect any case before six months after getting information. The spies themselves are not generally reliable. We have first to test them and if we are satisfied that the information they give is correct then we work up the case. At times it turns out that they themselves are watching us.

Q.—Could you tell us why comparatively few cases are detected or why it is so difficult to detect smuggling cases?

A.—We do not get any assistance from the public. The spy comes with a motive of bargaining and if we can satisfy him then we can get a case. Generally they get more from the smugglers.

Q.—Now take Burma. In Burma a very large number of seizures are made at Rangoon where there is a Customs staff?

A.—Yes.

Q.—We have got no similar advantage in this province?

A.—No. The position is quite different here.

Examined by MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—

Q.—You said I think that the present supply to both the registered consumers and the unregistered consumers was by the mahaldar?

A.—And also by the smugglers.

Q.—I take it that it is not to a great extent from the smuggler; the mahaldar supplies more?

A.—I have given my impression. The unregistered consumers get more from the smugglers.

Q.—If this cut is continued and the whole of the treasury opium is wiped out in five years, then on the same hypothesis, the demand will still remain at the end of five years?

A.—Only the money will go to different hands.

Q.—Do you think then that the opium-eaters will give up the habit or will they get opium from other sources?

A.—It is very difficult to give up the habit.

Q.—Your opinion is that the demand has to be supplied?

A.—There will be a slight decrease.

Q.—The demand that is left over has to be supplied?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What would be the source of supply?

A.—They are now getting it from smugglers. We have a case of Peshwaries bringing opium from Peshawar.

Q.—Why?

A.—For money.

Q.—You complained that one of the reasons for the non-detection was want of public co-operation?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Which public do you mean?

A.—I mean the general public, the villagers who know about these things and I think I may include the members of the Temperance Associations. They have done much by way of lectures. But they do not help in a single case for detecting smugglers.

Q.—Take Kamrup for instance. Do temperance people help you?

A.—No.

Q.—In Nowgong do they help you?

A.—No.

Examined by SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—

Q.—You say that Temperance workers have not helped you?

A.—No.

Q.—Did you ask any of the Temperance members to give you help? In Gauhati for instance whom did you ask?

A.—Yes, I think this fact is also mentioned in the Administration Report. I can mention the name of Srijut Nabin Chandra Bardoloi. The Excise Commissioner, Mr. Thomas had a talk with him and he promised to give all co-operation. But he did not.

Q.—Srijut Bardoloi may not have known any case? Did you ask him or Mr. Chaudhury in regard to any particular case? Or did you ask anyone in regard to any particular case?

A.—The help we want is of two kinds: one is for search and the other in supplying information. I need not ask you to supply information in your possession; you ought to do it yourself. And even when I asked them to be witnesses they always hesitated.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Is there any instance in Gauhati?

A.—Yes. There was a case at Pandu. It is very difficult to remember the names of persons.

Q.—Whom did you ask?

A.—Several gentlemen. I do not remember [illegible] names.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—In Nowgorg did you enquire the names of the Temperance Associations ?

A.—I know persons who speak on temperance. I do not know whether there is any list of their names.

Q.—Do you know any one of them ?

A.—You are one of them ; you speak on temperance.

Q.—Did you ask anyone ?

A.- Once I sent for the Mouzadar of Dharmtul, Bhagdutta.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Is he an opium eater ?

A.—I do not know.

Q.—You do not like educated persons taking opium shops ?

A.—If there is a desire for total prohibition then I ask why educated persons should take opium-shops.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—If the people of Assam are really in favour of total prohibition, you say that they should not apply for opium shops ?

A.—No. If they do so then they create an impression in the minds of the opium-eaters that they do not like the habit to go. So I say you must cut off all connection.

A.—With whom would you settle them then ?

A.—There are business men.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—*Do you mean up-country* men ?

A.—No.

Q.—Marwaries ?

A.—They are the worst men.

Q.—Chinese ?

A.—They never applied for opium shops.

Q.—Do you agree that they should settled at least with the Assamese people ?

A.—No.

To SUPERINTENDENT, Gauhati.

Q.—Mr. Gohain, do you know that in Kamrup subdivision there are 47 shops that are settled with up-country men ?

EXCISE SUPERINTENDENT :—

A —I do not think it is 47.

THE CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—You say that high class people should not have anything to do with shops?

RAI SAHIB P. C. ROY :—

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have there been any people of that class who are connected with opium shops?

A.—Yes. Of course they are connected indirectly.

Q.—You know there are educated people without employment?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Have you any objection if an opium shop is settled with an educated man if he belongs to the high class?

A.—I do not mind.

Q.—Have you come across cases where shops are settled *benami*?

A.—There are many instances.

Q.—Have you come across any case where more than one shop is settled with one mahaldar?

A.—I have got reports.

Q.—How many with one person?

A.—In Cachar 6 or 7 shops.

Q.—In the Assam Valley?

A.—In Lakhimpur 5 or 6.

Q.—And in the Goalpara districts?

A.—There is another instance of 6 or 7.

Q.—Who are these mahaldars, up-country people?

A.—I think they are up-country people

Q.—You know that the Assamese people have no connection with foreigners?

A.—There are rare instances of Assamese people having connection with foreigners. Sometimes they get money from Marwaries.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—In Lakhimpur Sadr subdivision 5 or 6 shops are settled with one up-country man?

A.—Yes.

Q.—What do you mean, are they *benami* transactions or are they settled with one man ?

A.—In the names of 5 or 6 men of course.

Q.—This is another reason which makes the task of the preventive staff difficult in detecting shortweights ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—This is also a great obstacle in your way ?

A.—Yes. But detection of shortweight is not my primary duty.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI—

Q.—You say that the opium-eaters do not give up the habit generally ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Do you know of any case of opium-eaters having given up their habit of opium-eating ?

A.—Yes, I have heard of some cases. I have also heard of many cases of their renewing the habit.

Q.—Do you know that due to this economic depression even the registered consumers have not been able to purchase their quota ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Is it not then a fact that the economic depression has been one cause for their giving up the habit ?

A.—No. Persons who have not taken their full ration and have not got a supply from elsewhere, they must have given up.

Q.—Is not the price of smuggled opium higher than the price of the treasury opium ?

A.—It is almost the same and in some places it is cheaper.

Q.—Where ?

A.—In Lakhimpur district it is cheaper. Of course it is adulterated smuggled opium. Sometimes it is sold at Re. 1-4-0.

Q.—Do you consider that a registered pass-holder, instead of purchasing his own quota, will take the risk of going to the smugglers to purchase opium at the same rate ?

A.—There is no risk. Their agents visit the villages and supply opium.

Q.—Have you any instances of that ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you detect any such agents ?

A.—Whenever we can, we detect cases.

Question being repeated to the SUPERINTENDENT, Gauhati.

GAUHATI SUPERINTENDENT :—

A.—I have not come across any such cases.

SPECIAL SUPERINTENDENT :—There was a case in Kahupathar.

The CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Was that case in the court ?

A.—Yes, he was convicted.

Q.—Did he confess that he went from village to village ?

A.—No, how would he confess ?

Q.—How many people were involved ?

A.—Two or three.

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI :—

Q.—Any other instance ?

A.—This last case of 9 seers; they visited from village to village.

The CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Where did you catch them ?

A.—Between Chapraghat and Bangaghat.

Q.—You did not get them when they were selling opium from village to village ?

A.—No But our information is to that effect.

Examined by RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—As special Superintendent is it your primary duty to check smuggling ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Can you explain the reason why Government prefers to settle the opium shops with foreigners ?

A.—I do not think there is any such rule. The rule has been relaxed against settling with foreigners in the case of excise and *ganja* shops. But in the case of opium shops it has not been relaxed.

Q.—In your opinion you think that the up-country mahaldar will bring in smuggled opium through their relatives whereas an Assamese mahaldar cannot go in for such smuggling ?

A.—That is my opinion. It is more difficult to detect a Marwari than an up-country man.

Q.—Do you agree that the number of Assamese is very negligible in comparison with up-country

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—In cases of detection of smuggled opium ?

A.—We find it easier to arrest an Assamese smuggler an up-country man or a Marwari. So we think that the As ese are not so accustomed to smuggling.

Q.—Have you any knowledge of any Marwari mahaldar any district ?

A.—There might be a few. In my time there were two Kamrup. In Dibrugarh there is one.

Q.—What are the reasons why the Superintendent of Exc recommends these men for settlement of shops ?

A.—I cannot say.

Q.—What procedure did you follow when you were charge of this district ?

A.—I always tried to give shops to the local people.

Q.—Your main duty is to check smuggling ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You have no concern with the district staff ?

A.—Practically we have no concern with the district staff.

Q.—You simply go for advice and consultation to the different district staffs ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You recommend that the ten per cent. reduction should be stopped immediately ?

A.—We must halt now.

Q.—This cut causes hardship to the registered opium-eaters because they do not get their full quota ?

A.—The cut is going on too rapidly to judge by the short-weight sales and smuggling. You must consider all these things together. I do not wish the cut should be stopped for good.

Q.—Probably you know that the registers were opened in 1929 ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—The educated people in the town will raise a hue and cry if Government re-open the registers saying that they do it for the sake of their revenue. What have you to say on this point ?

A.—I have been in service from the beginning of this policy. But unfortunately everything in connection with opium has taken place at inopportune moments. You opened the pass system in 1926 and all of a sudden we had orders that the district rations

[illegible] In 192[illegible] [illegible] very successful. I can speak about the [illegible] as far as Kamrup is concerned. The Deputy Commissioner held a [illegible] in the town. There was some disturbance and there [illegible] in the Council.

Q.—There is a feeling among the educated classes that the [illegible] passes should not be increased and that a large number of [illegible] file previously and which were rejected by the Deputy Commissioners, should not be considered again. Do you agree to this?

A.—This is what I say. Everyone knows that it was done hurriedly and not after due consideration.

Q.—You are of opinion that all these applications should [illegible] thoroughly overhauled?

A.—I do not say so.

Q.—You want to invite fresh applications?

A.—I am not of that opinion

Q.—What do you propose then?

A.—Even now the registers are already open. My opinion is [illegible] things can go on as they are. If you want to [illegible] open the registers, then my suggestion is you should [illegible] ral because the present system under which [illegible] not work.

Q.—Don't you think that it is futile unless the Deputy Commissioners send round notices to the [illegible] Excise Inspectors and the [illegible] that Government would entertain [illegible]

A.—I said the registers [illegible] be liberal.

Q.—Is there any [illegible] cards or books for [illegible] at one?

A.—Now-a-days we [illegible]

Q.—But there was a [illegible] and a certain [illegible]

A.—That exists [illegible]

Q.—Do you think that [illegible] checking smuggling?

A.—No.

Q.—Are you in favour of [illegible]

A.—I [illegible] have some [illegible]

Q.—Do you think it would be sound and feasible if a certain amount is placed by the Excise Commissioner at your disposal to appoint men from time to time and to place them in different centres for the purpose of detection? The men may go and settle there for six months or so

A.—This is what I have said. This will help me in successful detection.

Q.—You did not really want the strengthening of the ordinary staff?

A.—I have said that I want one more Inspector.

Examined by MAULAVI ABDUR RAHIM CHAUDHURY:—

Q.—If the cut is continued the present demand for illicit opium will increase?

A.—Yes.

Q.—So far as the younger generation is concerned, you have said in your statement, that it has had a very good effect?

A.—That is my impression.

Q.—You say that smuggling exists to a great extent for the reason that there are various difficulties in detecting. You mean to say that there are many cases going undetected?

A.—Yes.

Q.—This is only your surmise?

A.—That is what I see. I work up 10 or 12 cases in a year and come out successful only in one or two.

Q.—In many cases you get false information?

A.—Yes sometimes.

Q.—Do you advise us to give up this cut although, even according to you, we have had some good results out of it?

A.—I am not saying that in the case of the younger generation.

Q.—Then the policy should continue in respect of the younger people?

A.—Now-a-days you meet with very few people under 30 who are consumers.

Q.—Do you think that this policy has created a public feeling and do people realise that Government do not like this habit to continue?

A.—Yes. The main difficulty is this. Opium-eaters make Government responsible for everything and they do not know the details. Whenever they find anything not to their liking they accuse the Government.

Q.—You get no assistance from the public?

A.—They do not want to be dragged in and they do like to come and give evidence.

Q.—At least they do not stand in your way?

A.—No, I have never said that.

Examined by SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—You suggested that the only means of checking smuggling and shortweight would by removing the demand?

A.—That is one.

Q.—And give opium to those who want it. Then you say there will be no smuggling, no demand and no shortweight?

A.—Yes.

Q.—I am asking whether the present policy is a failure?

A.—It is partly a failure.

Q.—That failure consists in the fact that it has created a demand which is being supplied by smugglers and by short-sales?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And in order to do away with that failure you say that Government should remove the demand?

A.—My advice is not to remove but I am asking you to consider these difficulties also.

Q.—Do you want to remove the demand?

A.—If you want to check smuggling you should remove it.

Q.—Do you think that the object of the Government is to prevent smuggling and not to stamp out the opium habit?

A.—To do away with the habit.

Q.—You consider the present policy has been a failure because the smugglers are supplying opium?

A.—Yes.

Q.—And in order to meet that would you like to remove the demand?

A.—That is one way.

Q.—By supplying the demand we get one effective method of doing away with the smuggling?

A.—Yes.

Q.—But if you go supplying the demand how you can do away with opium and stamp out the evil?

A.—Yes, if you restrict the age, you can stop it after a few years. If you say that below the age of 40 there will be no passes issued you can do away with this evil in say 25

SRIJUT BRINDABAN CHANDRA GOSWAMI:—You have already said that you are not in favour of issuing passes below 50?

A.—I spoke of new passes.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—

Q.—Then your advice is that the present rations of an consumer should not be reduced?

A.—At present that is my view.

Q.—And those persons who are under 40 with passes, they should continue their passes?

A.—When you have given passes how can you stop it? They will not give up the habit.

Q.—Would you continue the reduction policy in the case of those under 40?

A.—Because you have already cut 50 per cent. I do not recommend it.

Q.—Amongst those under 40 there may be persons who get only half or one tola. Amongst the unregistered men there may be persons who are getting two tolas. In those cases there will be a distinction?

A.—You have already admitted the distinction.

Q.—We gave passes on condition that there will be a ten years' reduction.

A.—I do not remember. The order for reduction came in 1927 and there are passes that were issued before that year.

Q.—You say that if you supply all the demand it will stop smuggling and shortweight?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Then you agree there is no need for the Excise staff?

A.—There may not be necessity for the special staff but there will be necessity for the district staff.

Q.—In order to supply the shops?

A.—If you allow this policy to continue.........

Q.—Please do not mix up one question with the other. If you take to the method of removing the demand by giving people their full rations which you advised us to do in that case, there is no necessity for any Excise staff?

A.—I say there will be necessity. Because you are giving opium under certain conditions.

Q.—Then your position is remove the demand and give full rations; or, give greater staff?

A.—Not greater staff but strengthen the staff if you decide not to give new passes.

Q.—You suggest these two alternatives?

A.—Not exactly alternatives. I give you these two suggestions.

Q.—Either this or that?

A.—Yes.

Q.—You consider checking of smuggling by stronger additional staff is a practical proposition?

A.—It is not practical. It is only one solution as far as it goes. I cannot give you a guarantee that I can stop it completely.

Q.—Which do you personally favour, removing the demand or increasing the staff?

A.—I think we should work both ways.

Q.—If I take either of the two offers you recommend, there is an equal chance of success or failure?

A.—I say there will be a better chance in the first case and some chance of success in the second case.

Q.—What is the sale price of treasury opium?

A.—Rupees 100 per seer.

Q.—What is it in the neighbouring provinces?

A.—Cooch Behar Re. 1-8-0; Hill Tipperah Re. 1-10-0; Bengal Re. 1-10-0 per tola.

Q.—Even if we give passes to everybody is not there a chance of such opium underselling Assam treasury opium?

A.—The prices I have given are those that are paid in those places, and not in Assam. Smuggling is going on because they make enormous profits and those that want opium would pay any price.

Q.—You believe in the economic theory. If the treasury price is less do you believe the people will go to the smugglers?

A.—In Assam you must compare the prices with the prices at which smuggled opium is sold.

Q.—You do not understand me. Now it is believed that people purchase opium at a higher price because they cannot get licit opium. It is argued that if you [illegible] to the register they will take licit opium. If

given on the one hand treasury opium at Rs. 2 and Malwa opium at 4 annas, do you believe that he would take the treasury opium at Rs. 2?

A.—The ways of the smugglers are quite different. Their expenditure is different. They have to make provision for so many things and they pay highly for spies. They also make provision for the family of a man if he goes to the jail.

Q.—You say that the smugglers are selling at Rs. 2-8-0, and assume there is a good margin for the risk. Do you mean to say that they will not sell it at Re. 1-8-0 per tola?

A.—The opium is selling at Rs. 40 in Bikaneer and Jodhpur. Then the smugglers must add their expenditure. Then again these people will not lose their prestige for a small margin.

Q.—Supposing you put the sale price at Re. 1-4-0?

A.—Smugglers will come to take opium from you.

Q.—Will you kindly tell me if it is not a fact that there has been a larger percentage of detection of smuggled opium since the creation of the special staff?

A.—Yes there were more detections.

Q.—The increase of the number of detections does not necessarily mean that there is an increase in smuggling?

A.—I think it means an increase of smuggling. If there had been no cases how can people detect.

Q.—That is not my question. I say that more cases are detected on account of the special staff and this was not possible before when there was no staff?

A.—Partly it is so.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Is the increase in smuggling due to the 10 per cent cut?

A.—It is due both to the ten per cent. cut and the restriction.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—

Q.—Could you tell me what was the amount of opium smuggled in the year 1923-24 when there was no pass system and no reduction?

A.—Practically there was reduction because the shops were rationed.

Q.—You say that on account of the rationing system smuggling has started?

A.—That is one of the reasons because rations were inadequate. I am bringing to your notice the defects of the policy.

Q.—Do you think that it has been a good policy, I mean the reductions of rations?

A.—I consider it good but it was not made on a proper basis.

Q.—There were cases of smuggling of opium even prior to the starting of this reduction and restriction policy?

A.—There were cases of opium coming into Assam from 1923-24 when the shops were rationed.

Q.—Do you think that the coming of opium into Assam before 1923-24 was less or more than in 1928-33?

A.—I cannot give you any opinion about this. I can give an idea of last year only.

Q.—Don't you decoy smugglers into this province?

A.—No.

Q.—Don't you set up a purchaser and pay money to that man so that he brings you smuggled opium?

A.—We do that with smugglers who are in Assam and we never go outside Assam.

Q.—Therefore, the cases detected do not give an indication that they are really cases of smuggling?

A.—When a man smuggles opium sometimes we engage a spy and make these purchases.

Q.—Is it the practice or not to decoy smugglers?

A.—That is not the practice.

Q.—For that purpose you take advances of money in large sums from Government?

A.—Of course I take advances. But your question was if I decoyed smugglers. That I deny.

Q.—So I say that the quantity actually seized does not represent the quantity voluntarily smuggled?

A.—It must have been smuggled voluntarily.

The Excise Inspector Mr. Gohain who was present — Special Superintendent said that his [illegible] [illegible] taken as his opinion in all matters.

No. 42.

The Committee next examined DR. J. C. DAS :—

The witness submitted a statement which was read to the Committee.

Examined by the CHAIRMAN :—

Q.—Do you think that if we follow the suggestion made in your statement we shall be successful and the country will not be flooded with smuggled opium ?

A.—I do not believe in smuggled opium. How can I? There is the Excise Superintendent, the Excise Inspector and a whole host of them with powers more than those enjoyed by the police. I know of a case when a Professor was hauled up in a railway train. When there are officers with such high powers how can I believe in smuggling? Even if there is some smuggling it can only be very little.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—You speak from your experience in Kamrup ?

A.—Yes. I will give you one instance. When I was going to England, I was caught at Switzerland because I had 150 cigarettes with me.

MR. E. S. ROFFEY :—There is only one landing place there ?

A.—But everybody knows from what source opium comes. So far as I have made enquiries Rajputana is one, Tibet is another and Chinese opium on the border line. Also it comes from Cooch Behar.

Q.—Do you suggest that all railway passengers and river passengers should be searched ?

A.—Not always. If you keep a proper watch you can find out these.

Q.—You have an idea how many hundred miles of land frontier we have ?

A.—I cannot say.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI :—You advocate total prohibition immediately ?

A.—Yes.

Q.—It is said by the Special Superintendent that the Tempe- e workers or persons interested in stamping out the evil do help ?

A.—They never ask us.

Q.—If they want any help from respectable people of this n do you think that they will refuse such a help?

A.—I do not know that they have ever approached any

Q.—Would you have any objection to help them ?

A.—Undoubtedly not.

RAI BAHADUR NILAMBAR DATTA :—

Q.—Would you be prepared to give evidence in Excise cases?

A.—Certainly if I know about a case.

Q.—Without any fees?

A.—Certainly. If I happen to be personally there I will be l to help them as a good citizen; that is the duty of everyone.

SRIJUT ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI:—Do you think t only people like Rai Bahadur would help and not others?

A.—Every good citizen should do it.

The Committee then discussed the question of touring in the rma Valley before they drafted their report. Although in st districts of the Surma Valley, opium does not constitute a ious p oblem, the Committee decided to visit the valley in the so that members of the general public may be able to assist in solution of the problem as it existed in the province.

The Committee then adjourned to meet again at Sylhet 11 A.M., on Tuesday, the 25th July 1933.